

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

EXCLUSIVE! STAR TREK'S BRENT SPINER ON HIS UNLIKELY RETURN



THE
WORLD'S
No.1
SCI-FI
MAGAZINE

SPFX

275

DOCTOR STRANGE

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GOING BUMP IN THE NIGHT AGAIN

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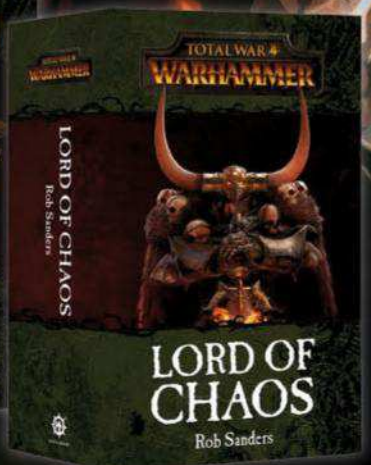
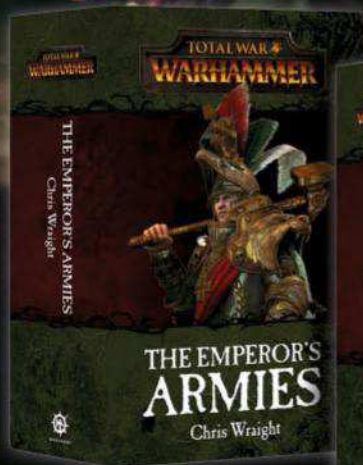
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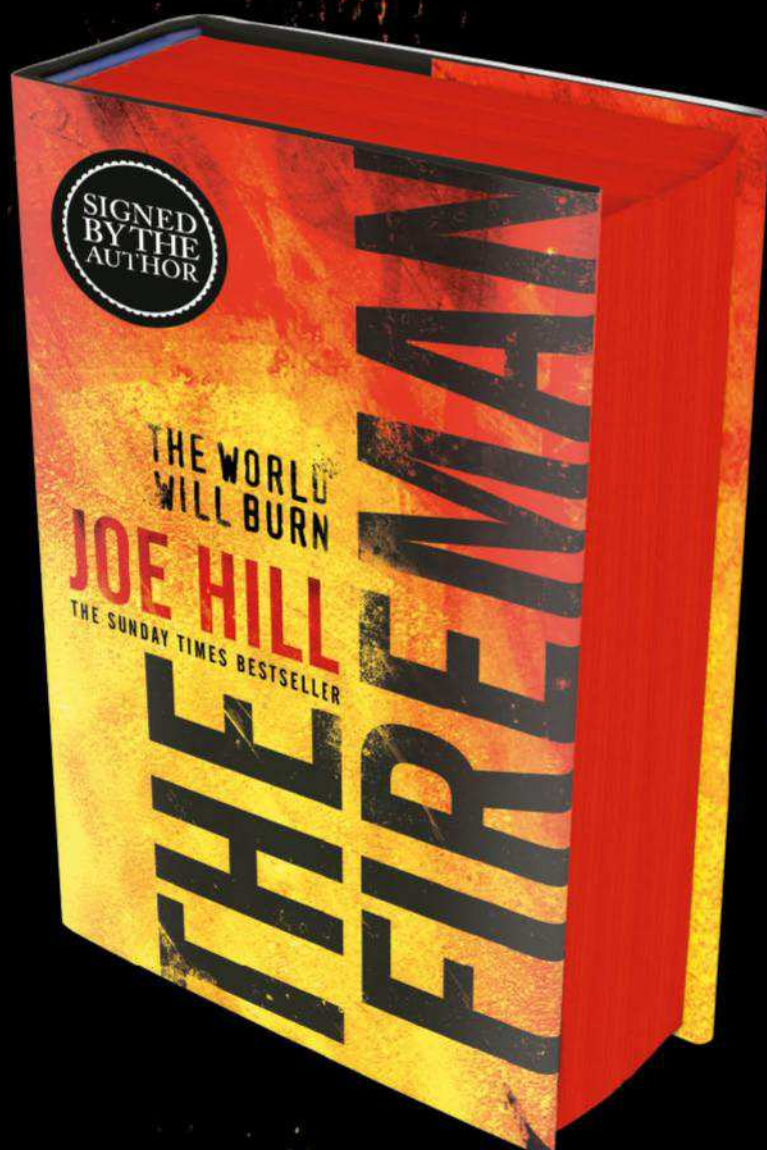


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DOCTOR STRANGE

"It's a classic Marvel origin story... one of the best origins ever"



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THE BFG

"It's a very loyal adaptation of the book"



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"It's not *The Exorcism Of Emily Rose* and all that crap"

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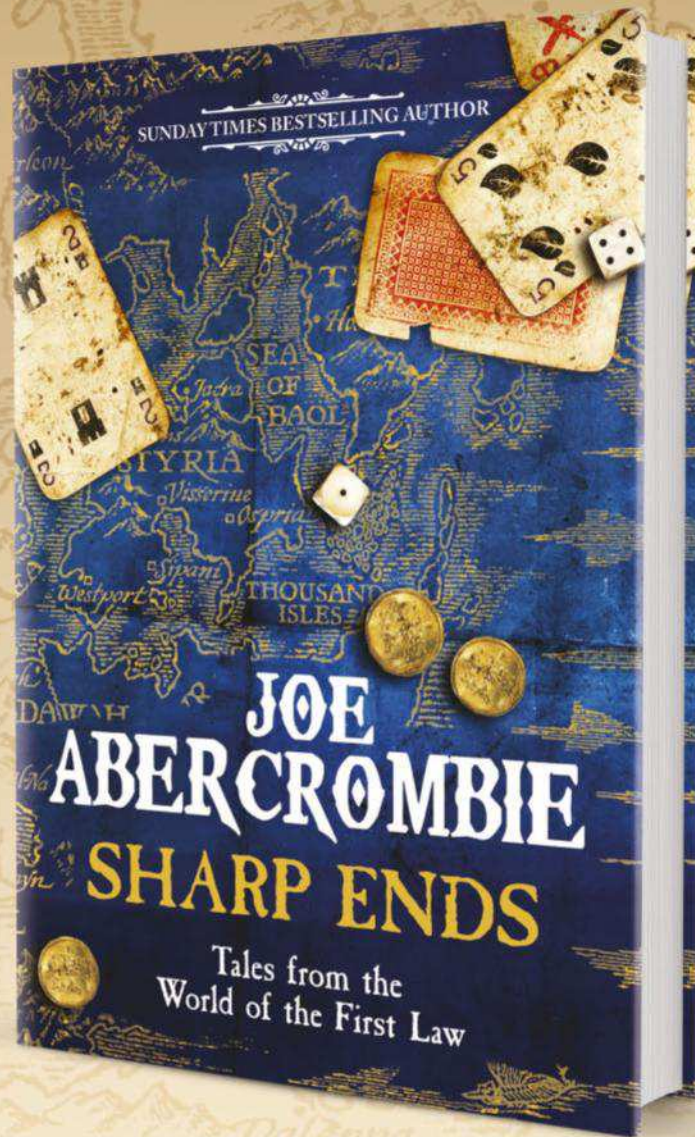
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Ian Berriman recalls his salad days with *Doctor Who Weekly*.

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Rants & Raves

INSIDE THE SFX HIVE MIND

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR RANTS

→ Great to have *Game Of Thrones* back, but [SPOILER] I saw Jon Snow's return coming a mile off. Not sure if it was worth the secrecy!
→ I'm sure Alden Ehrenreich will make a great Corellian smuggler – the Disneyfied Lucasfilm have been pretty good at casting so far – but I'm still wary of the Han Solo prequel. Hope I'm wrong...



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR RAVES

→ Thoroughly entertained by *Captain America: Civil War*. There were shots that felt like a fever dream I might have had as an 11-year-old.
RANTS
→ But let's not reduce it to DC v Marvel tribalism, eh? The only battle that matters is good movies v bad movies.



IAN BERRIMAN REVIEWS EDITOR RAVES

→ Been re-reading *Who* novelisations history *The Target Book* now it's had a revised reissue.
→ Delighted to see that '70s girls' anthology horror comic *Misty* is getting a reprint!
RANTS
→ Watched *Damien*. It's a bit cheesy, but worse, the timeframe doesn't add up. It's 15 years out!



WILL SALMON NEWS EDITOR RAVES

→ *Game Of Thrones* feels far more assured this year.
→ I'm taking command of the *SFX* and *Total Film* specials. I'm still around, but there'll be a new face wrangling the news next month.
RANTS
→ Liked *Civil War*, but I wish we'd had a film on Cap and Bucky, rather than *Avengers 2.5*.



RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR RAVES

→ *Zootropolis* could have been funnier but it was still good-looking and meaningful. Always leave your home town, folks.
→ Saw that American civil war flick. Tut tut, Spidey swore.
→ I rewatched the original *Star Wars* trilogy but – drat! – there's not enough room to tell you my new thoughts on the trio...



JONATHAN COATES ART EDITOR RAVES

→ WTF moment of the month: the Obamas dancing to "Uptown Funk" with R2-D2 and a load of Stormtroopers in the Oval Office. Did I dream it?
RANTS
→ Hoping James Cameron doesn't sign-off an incredible movie-making career with a load of back-to-back *Avatar* sequels.



CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK ART EDITOR RAVES

→ Was definitely in the camp of no more Spider-Man reboots; however, Tom Holland steals the show in *Civil War* and now I can't wait for his return.
→ Loved Roald Dahl books when I was little so have high hopes for Spielberg bringing *The BFG* to life.



ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER FAREWELL

→ After 23 years, and 275 editions of *SFX*, its time to say goodbye. It's been an amazing journey, and I leave with incredible memories. It almost feels like I'm about to regenerate! Until then, there must be no regrets, no tears, no anxieties. Just go forward in all your beliefs, and prove to me I am not mistaken in mine. Ade xx



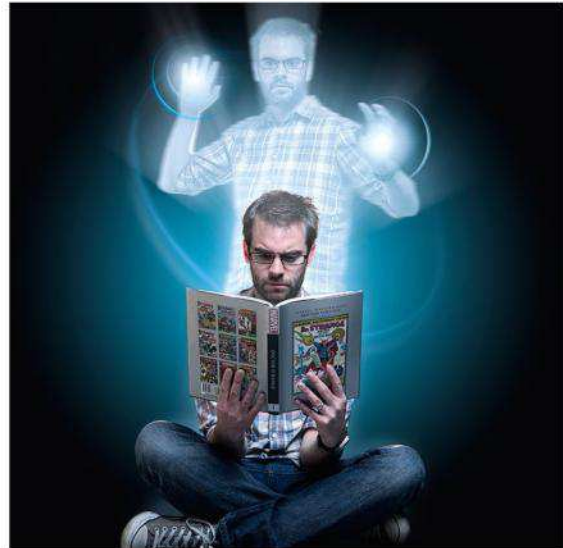
STEPHEN JEWELL WRITER RAVES

→ Not sci-fi as such but with its fictional comic strip *Fang The Kung Fu Werewolf*, Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips' *Criminal 10th Anniversary* special, especially the *Bizarre Adventures*-esque oversized edition, is a brilliant slice of faux-'70s retro.
→ I'm Team Russo Bros after the excellent *Civil War*!



NICKY GOTOBED DESIGNER RAVES

→ Alden Ehrenreich being cast as young Han Solo: yes, all good, but *huge* expectations to live up to, mind you – Harrison is Han.
→ One of my all time favourite hip-hop breakers and fellow gymnast Sofia Boutella being cast in *The Mummy* remake pleases me – she kicked butt in *Kingsman: The Secret Service*.



Back in the noughties, Pixar went on the sort of golden run that other studios could only dream of. *Monsters, Inc*, *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles*, *Ratatouille*, *WALL-E*, *Up*... Every one innovative, every one an instant classic.

These days Pixar's Disney stablemate Marvel is on a similarly hot run of form. Okay, there have been a couple of misfires (the decidedly average *Thor: The Dark World* and *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* spring to mind), but otherwise the house that Tony Stark built has evolved into a remarkable blockbuster machine.

So with the brilliant *Captain America: Civil War* now in cinemas (read our five-star review on p92), we thought it was a good time to look ahead to what's coming next from the MCU. We tell you everything you need to know about Benedict Cumberbatch's arrival as the Sorcerer Supreme, Doctor Strange (p44), and run down all the other Marvel movies and TV shows heading your way.

Plus, we don't know what possessed us, but we've decided to go behind the scenes of *three* spooky exorcism-themed dramas: *The Conjuring 2* (p68), *Outcast* (p72) and *The Living And The Dead* (p76). We don't *think* there are any actual demons lurking in the pages of the mag, but if one of them pops out and tells you to subscribe, it's probably best to listen – you can find out how on p36.



See me on page 54

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
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RICH'S PICTURE BY OLLY CURTIS

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DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE!

UNDER THE SHELL

Director Dave Taylor tells us how he's dug deep for the new *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie



Rebooting a beloved franchise

is a difficult balancing act. Fans want the property they love, done differently enough to justify the new version's existence. But stray too far from that source material, and you'll quickly encounter internet rage – as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* producer Michael Bay discovered when he briefly considered turning the Turtles from mutants to aliens on the first film. Back then, he was working with director Jonathan Liebesman.

Now, Bay's teamed with new hope Dave Green, to deliver *Out Of The Shadows*, a sequel that looks like the most faithful Turtles film yet.



Highlights



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WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

→ The animals are unleashed in *Zoo* season two.



14

MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

→ Examine the vast *Twin Peaks* cast list. Is your favourite in here?



22

MEET BILL

→ First impressions of the new *Doctor Who* companion – can she measure up to Jenna?

SCI-FACT! The Turtles first appeared in Mirage Comics in 1984. Look for a car with Mirage84 on the number plate.

“It was important to me to give each generation of fans something”

If 2014's *TMNT* was April O'Neil's story, *Out Of The Shadows* will be from the eponymous reptiles' perspective. “We get to see the Turtles in a much deeper way,” Green explains. “We’re telling a new chapter in their lives. This movie gets to spend more time with those brothers, exploring the dynamic between them. We get to spend time with those people we know and love from the first movie, from our childhood, from the cartoons.”

Telling the story from the Turtles' viewpoint not only takes the narrative closer to the cartoon and comics, it also allows Green to dig deeper into what makes them individuals. “It was important to touch on the things we saw in the first movie, the broad strokes of their personalities, but at the same time we needed to figure out what's under the surface,” Green says. “We don't just get to see Donatello as the nerdy one. Donny's a little shy, because he speaks a different language to the rest of the Turtles. But does he ever get frustrated because they don't understand his technobabble? We see Raphael's big heart. We went under the hood with each character.”

That character work didn't just apply to the dialogue. “Because we shot using motion-capture, we also worked out lots of little physical tics. So, when Michelangelo is bored, you'll see him swinging his nunchucks – they each have an activity. They're all impatient teenagers, they fiddle.”

This layered approach spread from the returning heroes to the new guys. Casey Jones, played by Elias Koteas in the 1990 Turtles movie, is key for fans. *Arrow*'s Stephen Amell will be bringing the hockey-masked vigilante to the reboot universe, and Green worked closely with him to deliver a fresh take. “I sat down with Stephen for breakfast, and we talked about who Casey Jones is. He's bringing us a Casey Jones who's at the origin point of the character. When we first meet him, he's a Corrections Officer for the New York Police Department. Early on in the movie, he has a change in his employment status and decides to take matters into his own hands.

“Stephen is bringing this energy to Casey, where it feels like Casey is trying on this new personality for the first time. We can see that excitement for having beaten someone up with a hockey stick – that rush of adrenaline. He's

not a perfect fighter, he doesn't execute every move with the elegance that the Turtles do. He's a little rough around the edges, he's still figuring out how to fight, how to be a vigilante, and what that means for his life.”

The concept of expressing personality through fight moves was applied across the (surf)board. “Everyone's got a different fighting style. Leonardo, who's the best ninja, is composed and surgical with his moves, he plans things out – he's precise. Michelangelo is a goofball when he fights, he's like Jackie Chan, he likes to embarrass his opponents as much as he enjoys pummelling them. Raphael, he's brute force – he's all about aggression. He's a football player, he'll just go right through you. Donatello's more calculating. And with Bebop and Rocksteady, we injected ideas of their size and the way someone that big would damage something. They're quite stupid with their fight moves, which is a lot of fun.”

One thing's for sure, Green's done his homework. “There's so many different factions of Turtles fans. There are the fans of the cartoon, the IDW series, the Nickelodeon series. I grew up absorbing myself in the cartoon and the original '90s movies. That's what I lived and breathed every day as a kid. There are so many different generations, so it was important to me to give each generation something. We would go through the comics, from the originals to the current day, we'd flip through and find poses, bits of dialogue, little pieces of set decoration that the Turtles might have in their lair, [such as] a sticker in the Turtle van. We managed to incorporate Casey Jones's 'Goongala' phrase, it's buried in the movie somewhere. We got pretty deep about it.” ●

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows opens on 30 May.



Turtles in “get high” shocker.

The Turtles are joined by the rather prettier Stephen Amell and Megan Fox.



Bebop and Rocksteady: anti-ninjas.



STREET FIGHTING MAN

Stephen Amell takes a break from wielding a bow and swings Casey Jones' hockey stick

How does it feel to be a part of the Turtles film universe?

→ It's still sort of surreal. I'm used to immediate gratification. We film an episode of TV and it airs a couple of months later. It's very strange; because I'd finished season three of *Arrow*, I had six days off, I went and filmed *Turtles*, and we wrapped *Turtles* five or six days before I went back for season four. So I can't figure out if I just filmed it or if I filmed it a decade ago.

Is it better than the first one?

→ I'm gonna say absolutely. It feels like a more fun movie, a bigger movie, a funnier movie, and we are pulling out all the stops in terms of beloved characters from the Turtles universe. We've got Bebop and Rocksteady, we've got Krang, Casey Jones... All the things that people know and love from the Turtles universe I think they're gonna get in this film.

How would you describe your take on the character of Casey Jones?

→ We meet him and he is a corrections officer. He's never wilfully broken the law in any major way. So it's fun because you get to play him going, "Alright, I tried to be a corrections officer. I tried to operate within the system. It's not working for me. So I'm gonna do it differently. I'm gonna take the law into my own hands." But of course when you first start doing that you mess up all the time. And Casey messes up in ways that are funny... There was a different fighting style than I'm used to on *Arrow*. He's a brawler. There's no elegance or finesse.

Do you have a favourite scene in the film?

→ There was this one scene that we shot where I'm questioning a bartender, because I'm looking for some people. And I got to - pardon my language - totally lose my shit in the bar, and just start trashing it. If there's a fun therapeutic thing you're looking to do, I highly suggest whipping pint glasses at bottles of booze. It's amazing. [Er, *SFX* doesn't condone trashing bars, even if you hang out with Ninja Turtles - Ed]

SCI-FACT! After *Along Came The Spider*, this is the second James Patterson adaptation that Billy Burke (Mitch) has appeared in.

SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE

ANIMAL ARMY

It's worldwide pandemonium as animals revolt in *Zoo* season two...



Forget the zombie apocalypse.

The animal kingdom has been rising up, baring its teeth and threatening mankind in CBS's *Zoo*. Based on the bestseller of the same name by James Patterson, the TV series finds zoologist Jackson Oz (James Wolk) and a group of experts investigating numerous violent animal attacks. However, those isolated incidents are about to explode on a more epic scale in season two.

"The important thing for us was raising the stakes of the show," says executive producer Josh Appelbaum. "If last season was the hint that there was something going on with the animals, and the search to understand what's going on, now it's a global event. Borders are shutting down. Quarantine zones are being set up... They are quarantining house pets.

"In the premiere, you find out the mutation has taken an unexpected turn," he continues. "All the stuff we've been seeing starts to affect a different species. That is wildly alarming and has great personal stakes for our team. Now the world has become almost a war zone. A lot of areas are under attack. Cities have fallen. Even navigating our way around the world becomes an obstacle for our people.

"At the same time, and probably more importantly for us, last season there was a lot of time spent having our team get to know each other," he continues. "They didn't assemble until the end of episode three and they didn't really get to work together until four. It was hard to give them opportunity to have personal conflict because they were all strangers. Now, they have a lot of history, and that history breeds conflict. They are still a family, so they fight like a family would."

Part of the fun of *Zoo* involves seeing exactly which beasts will revolt. The series previously featured lions, leopards, bears, bats, dogs,



“In our two-hour premiere, there’s a bad elephant that has an incredible debut”

Go, go, go! We're five minutes over on our parking ticket!

wolves and rats. This season introduces a few enormous creatures that guarantee big trouble.

"In terms of animals, in our two-hour premiere, there's a bad elephant that has an incredible debut," teases Appelbaum. "It's probably one of the coolest things we've done on the show. Another thing we haven't seen that we're working on right now is primates..."

"What we are starting to realise is the stuff that has happened with the animals is affecting the environment in a major way," he adds. "As the ecosystem gets disrupted, it changes the environment. The world is becoming a much more hostile place."

Appelbaum's credits include the mythology-heavy *Happy Town* and *Alias*. Serialised series often pile on the twists and secrets without offering any answers. Appelbaum promises that won't be the case with *Zoo*.

"On *Alias*, it worked great to hold on to the Rambaldi elements and what that was all about, for as long as possible, because I think it was something you didn't want answered," Appelbaum explains. "On something like *Zoo*, it's a different show. It's a summer event series. You want there to be mystery, but you want some satisfaction by the time the run is done. Last season, we didn't quite give the origin of the mutation, but we told you how it blew up. There was something pretty significant to hang your hat on. The stuff this season gives you context as well. I don't think that people will be frustrated." ●

Zoo season two airs in the US on CBS from 28 June, with a UK airdate TBC.

A quiet walk in the woods you say? Unlikely!



REX (1)



AERIAL ASSAULT

SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

→ *Mad Men's* Elizabeth Moss will be starring in Hulu's adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* in 2017.

→ Spike has ordered a 10-episode series based on Stephen King laugh-fest *The Mist*.

→ *Fear The Walking Dead* will be lurching into a third season.

→ A pilot has been ordered for a *Krypton* TV show following Kal-El's grandfather.

Okaaaay... → *The Shannara Chronicles* has been renewed for season two.

→ Kevin Smith to direct more episodes of *The Flash* in season three.

→ Season eight is very likely *Game Of Thrones's* last – and showrunners say there will be no spin-offs.

→ A TV movie of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is in the works for HBO.

→ Big Finish has renewed its *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* licences until 2025.

→ Joe Hill to write pilot for new TV adap of his *Locke & Key* comic.



GARY WHITTA

THE *BOOK OF ELI*
SCREENWRITER ON HIS ALL-TIME
GENRE FAVOURITES

Favourite SF/fantasy film

→ The ones that influenced me most as a kid were the original *Star Wars* trilogy, and *Time Bandits*. I loved that movie so much I made my own full-size replica map. *The Last Starfighter* also had a huge impact on me as a kid who grew up in the 1980s playing videogames. And Carpenter's *The Thing* was a big influence on my first novel, *Abomination*.

Favourite SF/fantasy TV show

→ Growing up it was undoubtedly the BBC TV adaptation of *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. Though it looks horribly dated now it struck me as wildly, radically brilliant, so unlike anything else on TV at that time. Later on, I became a massive fan of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Favourite SF/fantasy book

→ *Hitchhiker's* is my all-time number one. My favourite stuff right now? Patrick Rothfuss's *Kingkiller* books and the Joe Abercrombie *First Law* series. It doesn't quite qualify as SF, but I simply must recommend *Wolf In White Van* by John Darnielle. Absolutely brilliant.

Guilty SF/fantasy pleasure

→ I've been rewatching the entire run of *Battle Of The Planets*, which I loved when I was a kid. It's all on Hulu and the cool thing is that they also have the original *Gatchaman* series that *BOTP* was basically stitched together from, so it's interesting to watch both and see all the differences.

Gary wrote *The Book Of Eli*, worked on *Rogue One* and has penned the script for forthcoming thriller, *The War Magician*. He can be found at @garywhitta.



“DON'T QUOTE ME”

“I JUST FELT AS IF I DIDN'T GET IT, AND HAD I READ THE BOOKS, I MIGHT HAVE HAD A BETTER IDEA OF THE ROLE OF THE CHARACTER.”

Stephen – Stannis the Mannis – Dillane reveals he was a little befuddled by his time on *Game Of Thrones*.



SCI-FACT! Other old pals returning include Kimmy Robertson, Michael Horse, Wendy Robie and Warren Frost.

CAST BREAKDOWN

LYNCH MOB

Many familiar faces are set to show up in the new *Twin Peaks*...



With shooting on season three of David Lynch's supernatural thriller/weird ass soap now completed, Showtime has released the full cast list of 217 actors – some old, some new and some A-list...

COMING HOME

Kyle MacLachlan will be returning to the central role of wide-eyed FBI agent Dale Cooper. He's joined by Sheryl Lee, who played both the murdered Laura Palmer and her cousin Maddy, while Laura's father Leland (Ray Wise) and mother Sarah (Grace Zabriskie) are also back. David Duchovny will be donning a dress once more as Special Agent Denise Bryson, while Miguel Ferrer returns as tactless Albert Rosenfield.

Sherilyn Fenn, Mädchen Amick, Dana Ashbrook and James Marshall will also be reprising the roles that made them stars, and we will finally discover what happened to Richard Beymer's nefarious Ben Horne. But perhaps most exciting is the news that Catherine E Coulson – *Twin Peaks*' famous Log Lady – is appearing. Coulson passed away last year, but seems to have recorded a few scenes in the early weeks of filming.

MOVING IN...

Super-starry talent joining the show includes Naomi Watts, Monica Bellucci, Tim Roth and Michael Cera. Laura Dern, Amanda Seyfried and Tom Sizemore are also coming to town.

From a music background, Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor will be rubbing shoulders with Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, while indie pop star Sky Ferreira and singer-songwriter Sharon Van Etten will all be appearing on screen.

MOVING OUT...

There are some surprising absences, like Michael J Anderson's Man From Another Place. The Black Lodge's sharpest dancer was intimately connected to Caryl Struycken's Giant, who is coming back. What could have become of him?

Piper Laurie's villainous Catherine Martell is AWOL, and there's also no sign of Lara Flynn Boyle or Moira Kelly, who both played Donna Hayward. Annie? *Shrugs* – Heather Graham is nowhere to be seen. Finally, Joan Chen is also MIA, meaning that Josie's spirit is likely still trapped in that doorknob. ●

Twin Peaks will be airing in the UK on Sky Atlantic in 2017.

Cherry pie
with that?



AERIAL ASSAULT

SCI-FI TV
ROUND UP

→ Netflix has ordered a full series based on Jon Bernthal's



Punisher, last seen in *Daredevil*.

→ The new **Star Trek** TV show will begin filming in Toronto this autumn.

→ Netflix has picked up

Travellers – a new time travel series from the producers of *Stargate SG-1*.

→ *Family Guy*'s Seth MacFarlane is developing a sci-fi sitcom set 300 years in the future.

→ Nick Tarabay (formerly of *Spartacus* fame) has been cast in **The Expanse** season two.

→ Robert Kirkman has apologised – sort of – to fans miffed at that “who’s dead?” *Walking Dead* cliffhanger.

→ Sean Harris has dropped out of Starz's **American Gods**, citing “personal reasons”.

→ Vanessa Williams has joined the cast of **The Librarians** third season.

→ *Misfits* creator Howard Overman has masterminded horror comedy **Crazy Face** for E4 and Netflix.

“DON'T QUOTE ME”

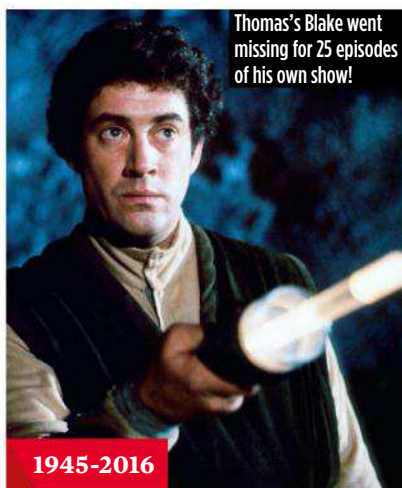
“COULD YOU DIRECT THE FANTASTIC FOUR? THEY KEEP F**KING IT UP! LIKE, GODDAMN IT. IT'S THE FANTASTIC FOUR.”

Chris Rock begs JJ Abrams to rehabilitate Marvel's first family at the cinema. Well... he's got a point.



SCI-FACT!

The English language dub of *Marnie* features Hailee Steinfeld and Kiernan Shipka as Anna and Marnie respectively.



Thomas's Blake went missing for 25 episodes of his own show!

1945-2016

GARETH THOMAS

SFX was sad to learn of the passing of one of the greats of sci-fi TV

➔ It was announced on 13 April that Gareth Thomas – the actor who, for many will forever be remembered as TV freedom fighter Roj Blake – had passed away from heart failure at the age of 71.

Blake's 7 was just one role in an almost 50-year screen career, which began in 1965, with Thomas playing Benvolio in a TV adaptation of *Romeo And Juliet*. It wasn't long, however, before he was chalking up genre credits. He appeared in *Quatermass And The Pit*, *The Avengers*, Anglo-German sci-fi series *Star Maidens* and the wonderfully chilling *Children Of The Stones* before landing his defining role.

Blake's 7, when it started out in 1978, was a tougher, grittier series than its BBC stablemate, *Doctor Who*. Blake himself was a freedom fighter dedicated to battling the tyrannical forces of the Federation. Thomas imbued the character with dignity and determination for two series, before deciding not to return for series three. He made one last appearance in the show, returning for its famously bleak final episode in series four.

Later in life Thomas made high profile appearances in *The Strangers*, *Torchwood*, the rebooted *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)* and his own favourite role, the rural drama *Morgan's Boy*, for which he was nominated for a Bafta. He recorded several *Blake's 7* audios and was also a regular fixture on the sci-fi convention circuit, where his many fans have fond memories of talking with one of the icons of TV SF. ●

© BBC (1)

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

Check out our review of the film on page 96.



BEST OF FRIENDS

Studio Ghibli makes what may be its final bow with *When Marnie Was There*

➔ After turning *The Borrowers* into 2010's *The Secret World Of Arrietty*, Studio Ghibli has proved itself adept at adapting classic British stories into Japanese animated movies. Now, with what could possibly be its last film following the retirement of founder Hayao Miyazaki in 2014, the legendary Tokyo studio has adapted another children's favourite with *When Marnie Was There*, which is based on Joan G Robinson's 1967 novel of the same name.

"When the producer, Toshio Suzuki, showed me the book, I read it and thought that it was very moving," says director Hiromasa Yonebayashi, who also helmed *Arrietty*. "But I thought it would be very difficult to visualise in a film, as most of the original novel was about internal turmoil. So I began to imagine some things that were not in the original novel, such as the dance sequences at the mansion."

With Yonebayashi stressing that, "it is not a ghost story," the film centres around troubled teenager Anna, who forms a close relationship with the mysterious Marnie after relocating to the countryside. "Marnie is Anna's imaginary friend, she's sort of her creation, her ideal friend in her mind," explains Yonebayashi, who utilises Anna's constant sketching to bring her emotions to life on the screen.

While Marnie still boasts distinctive blonde hair and blue eyes, the setting has been changed from Norfolk to rural Japan. "When Mr Suzuki asked me to do that, it seemed like the natural thing to do because it would be easier for the Japanese audiences to relate to," says Yonebayashi. "We've also kept the cloudy skies from the original book, as how Anna feels is reflected in the scenery." ●

When Marnie Was There opens in June.

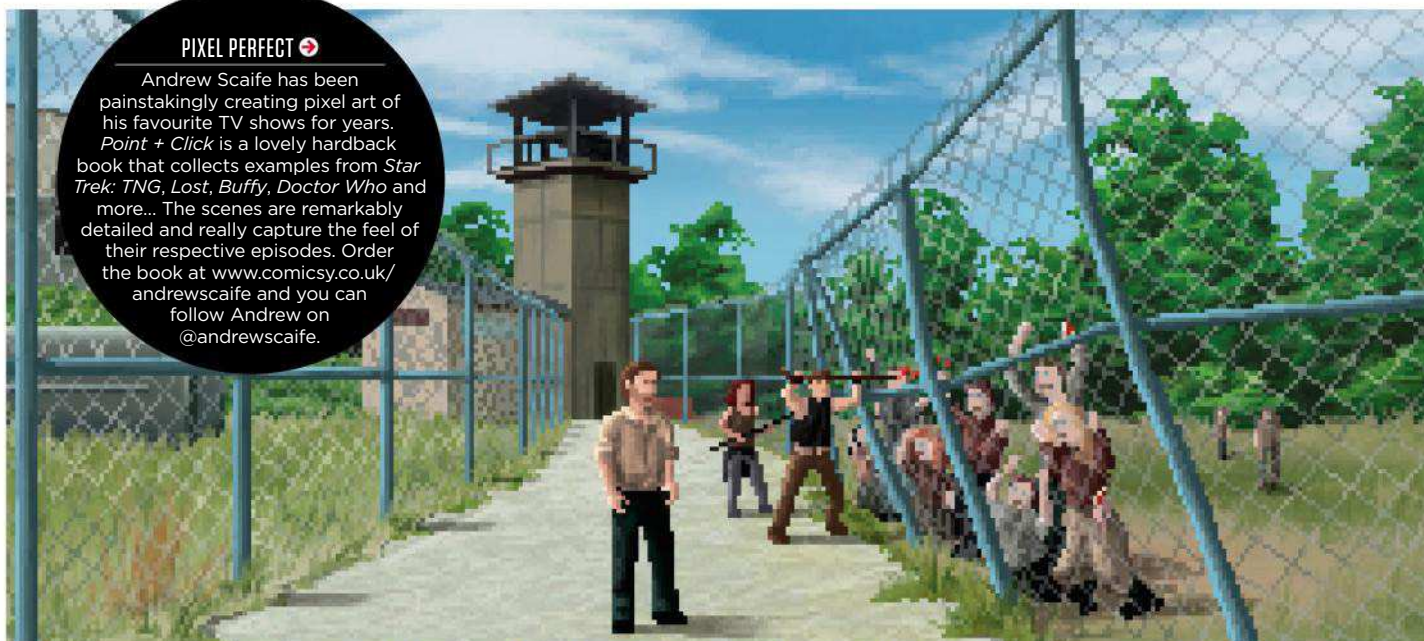
Red Alert Summer 2016 Image Bank

Where pictures are greater than words

SCI-FACT! The title *Ghost In The Shell* is a direct homage to Arthur Koestler's famous book *The Ghost In The Machine*.

PIXEL PERFECT

Andrew Scaife has been painstakingly creating pixel art of his favourite TV shows for years. *Point + Click* is a lovely hardback book that collects examples from *Star Trek: TNG*, *Lost*, *Buffy*, *Doctor Who* and more... The scenes are remarkably detailed and really capture the feel of their respective episodes. Order the book at www.comicsy.co.uk/andrewscaife and you can follow Andrew on @andrewscaife.



Use plank of wood with fence

GIVE PICK UP USE
OPEN LOOK AT PUSH
CLOSE TALK



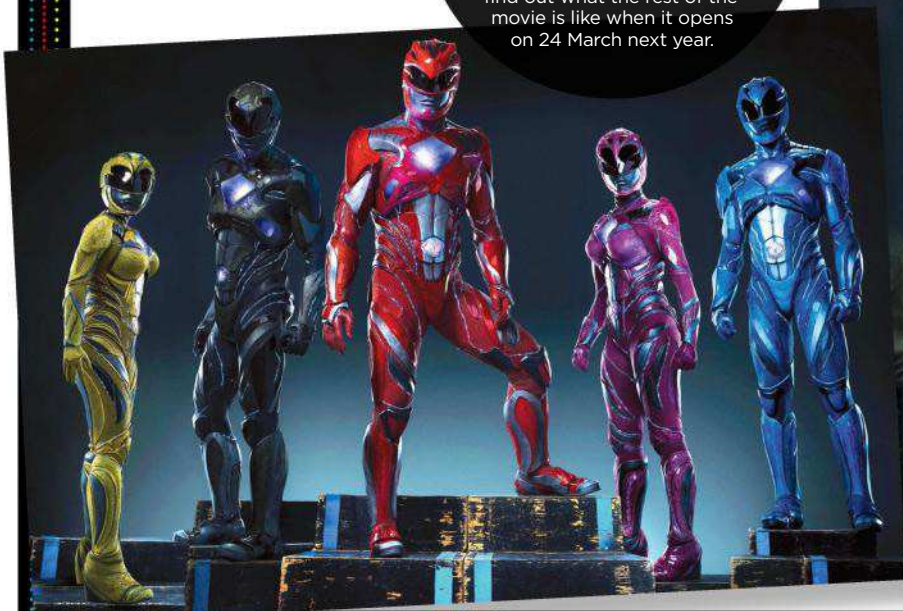
MORPHIN' TIME

Here's your first glimpse of the five leads in the upcoming *Power Rangers* reboot and it's a much slicker, more clearly superhero-influenced look than we're used to. The heels and breast armour on the Yellow and Pink Rangers are a weird choice, however, and have proven divisive in *Rangers* fandom. We'll find out what the rest of the movie is like when it opens on 24 March next year.



CYBERWOMAN

Scarlett Johansson certainly loves her sci-fi... Here she is in the first shot from DreamWorks's much-anticipated live-action adap of cyberpunk anime classic *Ghost In The Shell*. She plays the cyborg squad leader of Public Security Section 9. Ace though she is, it's a confusing bit of casting – in the original the character is Japanese and called Motoko Kusanagi. The film opens on 31 March 2017.



SCI-FACT! China Miéville has the highest number of Clarke wins, with three awards on his mantelpiece.



AFTERLIFE CELEBRATING ICONIC SCI-FI STARS

117

BURN GORMAN

Owen Harper
in *Torchwood*



Owen was *Torchwood Three*'s medical doctor. Brilliantly played by Burn Gorman, who has gone on to appear in blockbusters like *The Dark Knight Rises*, he was killed off halfway through season two, briefly resurrected as a zombie, and then offed again.

Would any of your character's skills have been useful in real life?

→ His obsession with finding out the truth made him, if not a fully-rounded human being, a very good doctor!

What's the strangest request you've had from a fan?

→ To sign a sex toy, which had possibly been used! Being a quiet and retiring sort I declined.

What would Owen be doing now?

→ I like to think that he mellowed as different parts of his body fell off. It's no good having a part-zombie in an action team, so he'd be taking it easy.

Is there anything you think was unfinished about Owen's story?

→ He had a relationship with Tosh, but he treated her badly. I would've liked to see that developed slightly.

Did you get any set souvenirs?

→ The main Hub set was next to the TARDIS, so perhaps something was ripped off the console, but I can't confirm or deny that!

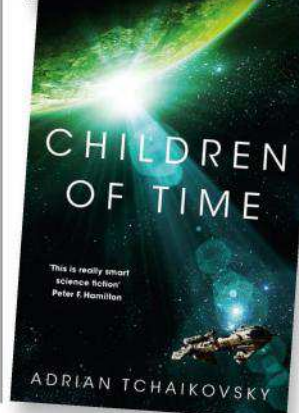
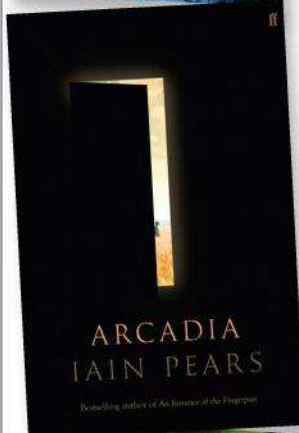
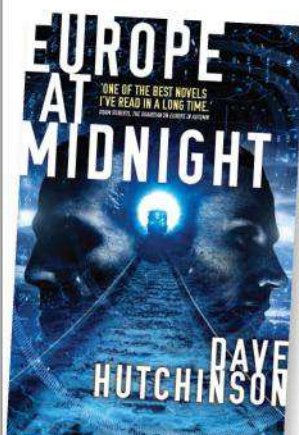
What would it say on his gravestone?

→ Here lies Owen Harper - stiff in death as in life!

AWARDS NEWS

30 ROCKS!

The shortlist for the **Clarke Award** once again offers a snapshot of the best in literary SF



The shortlist for the 30th

Arthur C Clarke Award has been announced. As ever, it's an eclectic list that covers the full gamut of speculative fiction, from a story of intergalactic travel that was initially self-published, through to a literary work about the power of stories that was also released as an app.

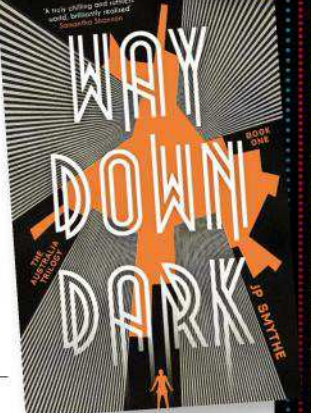
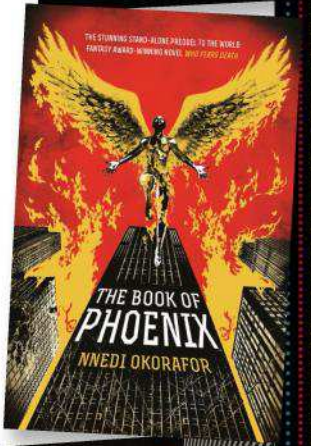
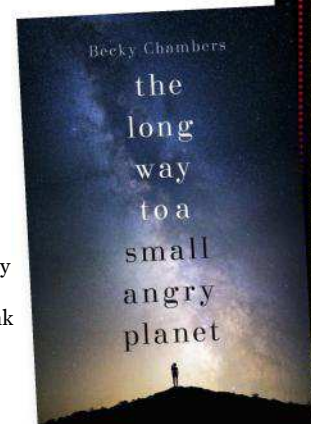
"When it's your award's 30th anniversary you secretly hope for something that little bit extra special in your shortlist, and I think the judges have delivered on that promise and more this year," says Clarke Award director Tom Hunter.

Perhaps the best backstory to any of the novels belongs to Becky Chambers' *The Long Way To A Small Angry Planet*. Finding her freelance work drying up, Chambers turned to Kickstarter for funds and put the book out herself, soon bagging a Kitschier nomination for best debut. Hodder & Stoughton picked up the novel in the UK.

As for the novel that experiments with form, this is Iain Pears' *Arcadia* (Faber & Faber), a world-hopping fantasy. The list is rounded out by Dave Hutchinson's *Europe At Midnight* (Solaris), the second volume in his sequence about a balkanised Europe; the magical futurism of Nnedi Okorafor's *The Book Of Phoenix* (Hodder); JP Smythe's tale of life aboard an inter-generational starship, *Way Down Dark* (Hodder); and Adrian Tchaikovsky's tale of tension and terraforming, *Children Of Time* (Tor).

"This is a quintessentially Clarke Award kind of a shortlist," says Hunter. "Look once and I'm sure everyone will see a choice they agree with. Look twice, and you'll likely see a new book you want to read next. Look a third time though, and I hope you'll see how well all of these six books sit together, and represent a particular special moment in time for the best of UK science fiction."

The ceremony takes place on 24 August.



SCI-FACT! Stephen King first thought of his *Dark Tower* idea in 1970 – two years before Idris Elba was born.

THE DARK TOWER

The adaptation of Stephen King's epic heptalogy is finally underway

DARKNESS FALLS

With a core story originally spanning seven books, and an expanded universe comprising of not just an eighth novel but nearly all of its author's oeuvre, *The Dark Tower* is Stephen King's magnum opus. The legend of gunslinger Roland Deschain and his expedition through the land of Mid-World to reach the eponymous Dark Tower was inspired in equal parts by *The Lord Of The Rings* and *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* – and the post-apocalyptic Western trek is finally set to leap from the page and into cinemas next year.

HOWARD'S END

The series is no stranger to talks of adaptations; its history with Hollywood is almost as arduous as Roland's journey through a world "moved on". Back in 2007, JJ Abrams and Damon Lindelof were in discussions to bring the saga to the big screen across multiple films until progress halted in 2009. Ron Howard was then linked to the project in 2010, which had morphed into a trilogy of films and a tie-in TV series with HBO, but it was passed up by multiple studios. All was not lost, as Sony Pictures announced a reworked project in 2015. Now set to be a single movie helmed by Danish director Nikolaj Arcel, there's potential for further films or TV expansions if it's deemed a success.

TOWER RANGERS

Filming has already begun in South Africa, and the initial casting announcements have been met with considerable praise. Idris Elba will play Roland Deschain, a character originally based upon Clint Eastwood's *Man With No Name*. He'll be squaring off against Academy Award winner Matthew

McConaughey, who's the "man in black" Walter Padick – a recurring antagonist in King's works who also crops up as Randall Flagg in *The Stand*.

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

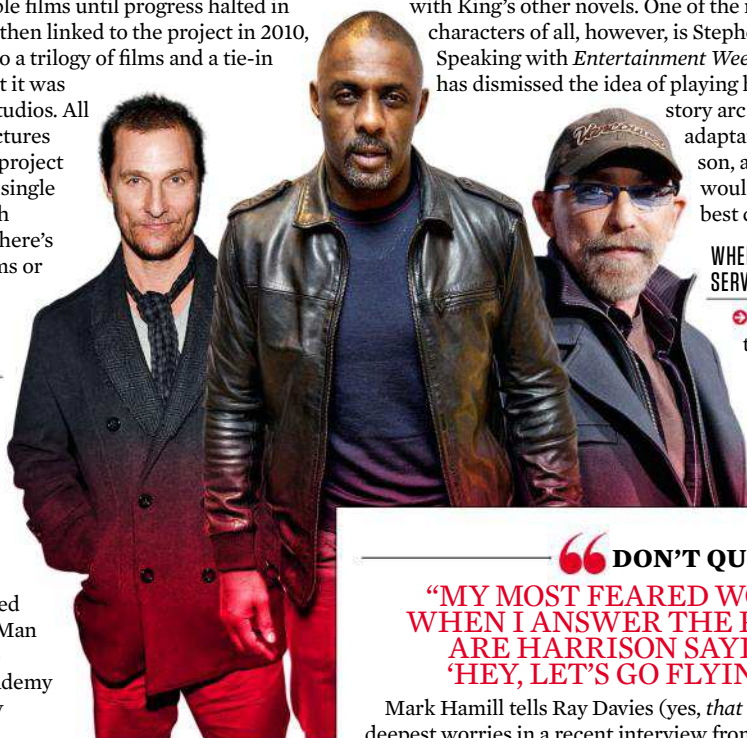
How will Arcel squeeze seven books into a single film? He won't. Stephen King has already revealed that the film picks up midway through the saga, dashing hopes that this would be an adaptation of just *The Gunslinger* or *The Drawing Of The Three*. *Watchmen*'s Jackie Earle Haley has been cast as Richard Sayre, a character first introduced in book five, suggesting that *Wolves Of The Calla* could be the entry point.

KING FOR A DAY

From *Salem's Lot*'s Father Callahan to *Hearts In Atlantis*'s Ted Brautigan, *The Dark Tower* shares many characters with King's other novels. One of the most critical characters of all, however, is Stephen King himself. Speaking with *Entertainment Weekly*, the author has dismissed the idea of playing himself if this story arc makes it into an adaptation – surely his son, author Joe Hill, would be the next best choice?

WHEN WILL ROLAND SERVE THE BEAM?

If all goes to plan, the man in black will flee across the desert and the gunslinger will follow on 17 February 2017.



“DON'T QUOTE ME”

“MY MOST FEARED WORDS WHEN I ANSWER THE PHONE ARE HARRISON SAYING: ‘HEY, LET’S GO FLYING!’”

Mark Hamill tells Ray Davies (yes, that Ray Davies) his deepest worries in a recent interview from *The Big Issue*.



NEWS
WARP

HIGH-SPEED
FACTS

→ **Alden Ehrenreich** is the new Han Solo in Christopher Miller and Phil Lord's upcoming solo movie.

→ **Blade Runner 2's** release date has been nudged forward to 6 October 2017. It's really happening...

→ **DC's Vertigo** imprint to be "restructured", and its vice president and executive editor, Shelly Bond, is departing.

→ **Avengers: Infinity War Parts 1 & 2** will be getting individual titles.

→ Justin Monjo confirmed to be writing the script for a **Farscape** movie.

→ **Joss Whedon** hints that he may not actually be done with the Marvel movies.

→ Emilia Clarke not returning for any future **Terminator** films.

→ A teacher in Tennessee has been suspended for airing **Human Centipede 2** to her class.

→ Princes William and Harry reportedly set to appear as stormtroopers in **Star Wars VIII**.



REX (4)

SCI-FACT!

Cronin originally intended to put *The Passage* out under a pseudonym – Jordan Ainsley.

NEW AUTHOR

BETH LEWIS

THE AUTHOR OF
THE WOLF ROAD ON
HER DEBUT, A POST
APOCALYPTIC SURVIVAL
STORY SET IN CANADA



What can you tell us about the world of *The Wolf Road*?

→ *The Wolf Road* is set in the wilderness of post-apocalyptic British Columbia. I travelled through Canada in my twenties and fell in love with the landscape.

Tell us a little bit about Elka...

→ She's been raised by a man she calls Trapper. He taught her everything she needs to survive, but he's not what he seems. She flees in search of her parents, but Trapper isn't letting her go easily...

What was the initial idea that sparked the novel?

→ There was a scene in a TV show featuring a girl who saw a woman her father had killed as a deer. That this girl could be so blind to what he had done made me question whether she was a victim as well, or if she was complicit. I wanted to explore that while still making the reader cheer for her.

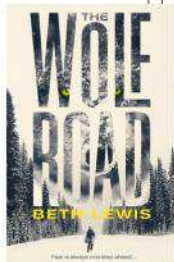
You work as an editor. Has that fed into the book?

→ Yes. I work with licensed books, mainly TV, movie and videogame tie-ins. I love seeing how a game or a movie evolves from concept sketches. This visual focus has fed into my writing.

Who are your literary heroes?

→ So many. Clive Barker taught me that horrific can be beautiful, Emily Brontë taught me about making the landscape as vivid as the characters, and David Mitchell taught me that anything is possible.

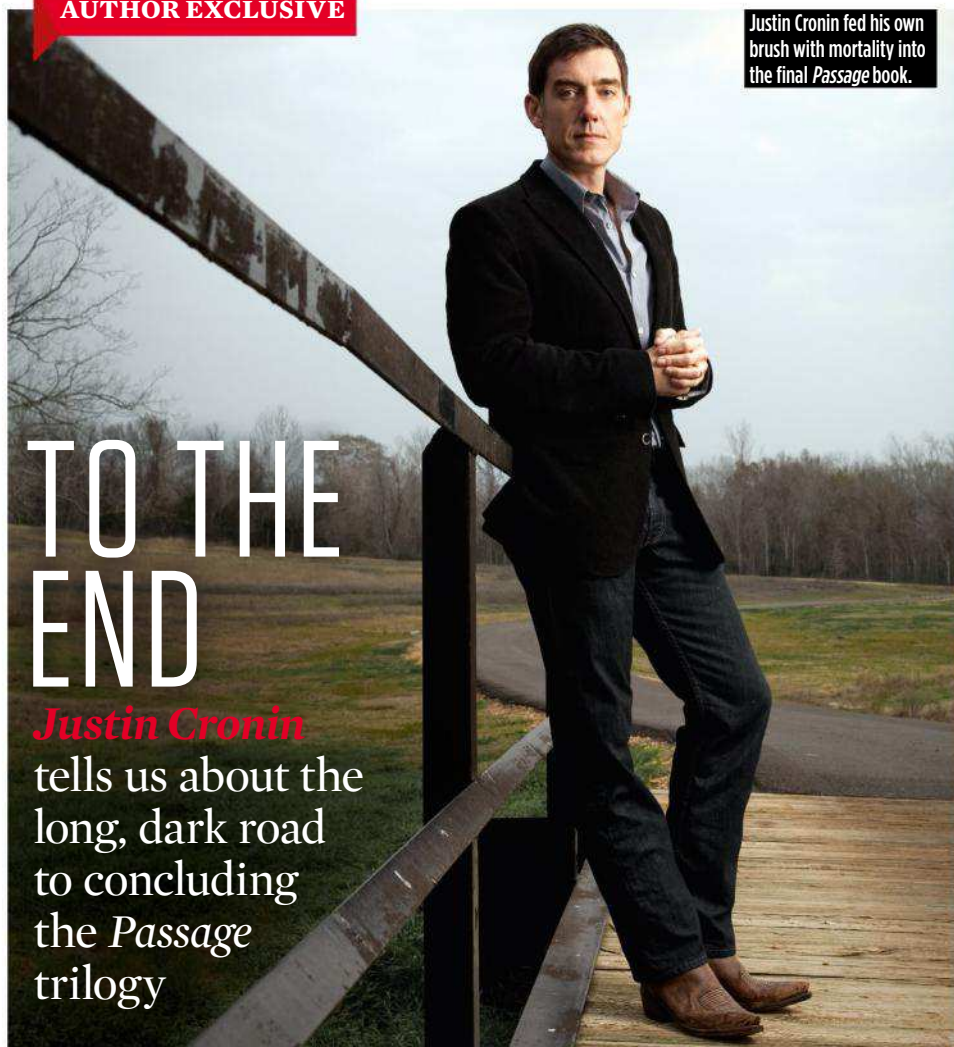
The Wolf Road is out on 30 June from The Borough Press.



AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

TO THE END

Justin Cronin
tells us about the
long, dark road
to concluding
the *Passage*
trilogy



Justin Cronin fed his own brush with mortality into the final *Passage* book.



The City Of Mirrors, the third book

in Justin Cronin's *Passage* trilogy, is about to be released, more than three years after *The Twelve*. There are two reasons, says Cronin, for the long gap between volumes. Firstly, he simply wanted "to get it right". The second reason, however, was rather more serious: a diagnosis of prostate cancer.

"You travel the halls of the American cancer-industrial complex," he says. "You have to find doctors, you get a second opinion, you do this test, that test, it takes a long time to figure out what you're going to do. Then you have [treatment], and then you feel like crap and stare into space for a while."

He calls his diagnosis "a horror show", but Cronin refuses to be downhearted. It probably helps that his treatment has been successful, but he also drew on his experiences for a book that follows some of the characters he created for *The Passage* into their fifties. "Throwing a visit from the mid-life mortality fairy into the

mix, I'm not happy it happened, but it was, I guess you could say, artistically useful."

It's also served as a reminder of just how much of Cronin's career the books have taken up. When Cronin began writing the novels – end-of-civilisation-as-we-know-it vampire books, but smarter than that sounds – his daughter Iris, who famously helped him develop the books by chatting with her father as he jogged, was at school. "The little girl that helped me write the book is now a functioning, independent person in the world, and she lives about 1,800 miles from here," he says.

As for whether the *Passage* books will ever make it to the screen, Cronin isn't allowed to discuss, although he does have this to say: "A lot of people have told me this would be much better as a cable TV show [than movies], and I've never said I disagree with them." ●

The City Of Mirrors is published by Orion on 16 June.

JULIE SOEFER

BOLDLY GO

Celebrate 50 years of the final frontier in Birmingham with **Destination Star Trek Europe**

➔ **Star Trek turns 50 this year, and with a new movie imminent** – not to mention next year's TV revival – this year's **Destination Star Trek Europe** will be something special.

Birmingham NEC plays host to the three-day event which boasts a seriously impressive list of guests – chief among them the irrepressible William Shatner. His talk is bound to be the event highlight, and he will also be on hand for autographs and photos. The other headliner is Christopher Lloyd. Klingon Commander Kruge in *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* – you may also have seen him in some obscure time travel flick called *Back To The Future...*

Shatner isn't the only representative of the original series. He'll have able support from Walter Koenig, one-man *Buzzfeed* George Takei, plus Eddie Paskey (Lieutenant Leslie) and Bobby Clark – the Gorn captain.

The Next Generation is equally well-served with Jonathan Frakes, Marina Sirtis and geek culture maven Wil Wheaton all representing the Enterprise D. Both Dax actors from *Deep Space 9* – Terry Farrell and Nicole de Boer – will be there (possibly even at the same time, which surely breaks some law of space and time) as will Armin Shimerman and Alexander Siddig, plus numerous stars of *Voyager* and *Enterprise*.



The name's Kirk. James Kirk.

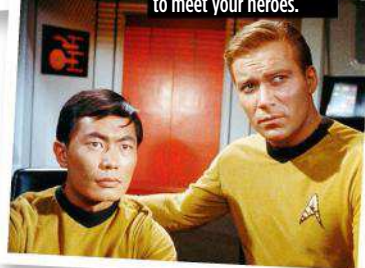
It's not just about the guests though. The Klingon Zone celebrates *Trek's* most famous alien race; you can have your photo taken on the bridge of the Enterprise D; and there will be a packed talk programme throughout, with two – “50 Years Not Out: Celebrating *Star Trek's* Many Re-inventions” and “All

Hail The 50 Year March of the Klingons” – included in the ticket price. There'll also be a raft of parties where you can let your hair down and drink with other *Trek* fans – no word as yet if Romulan Ale and Klingon Bloodwine will be on the menu. ●

Destination Star Trek Europe runs from 7-9 October at Birmingham NEC.
www.destinationstartrek.com



Whichever your favourite series, this is your chance to meet your heroes.



DATE
7-9 October
LOCATION
Birmingham NEC

DATE
19-21 August
LOCATION
Hilton Birmingham Metropole

ROLL OUT...

Whether you're an Autobot or Decepticon, **TFNation** is the con for you



➔ **It may have started** out as a humble toy franchise, but these days *Transformers* is a much-loved cult phenomenon, despite Michael Bay's best efforts to sour us on Optimus and co. This convention dedicated to robots in disguise takes place in Birmingham's Hilton Metropole hotel.

Comics writer Simon Furman has a long history with *Transformers* and he's heading up a guest list that also includes artist Guido Guidi, concept artist Emiliano Santalucia, who has worked on the film franchise, and voice artist Paul Eiding. Expect to see lots of impressive robots at the cosplay contest while The Forge is TFNation's fan creativity area, where artists can display their hard work.

Weekend tickets for TFNation cost £55 for adults, £35 for 13-17 year olds, £20 for seniors and free for children. Individual passes for Sunday only are also available. Whether you're a fan of the cartoon, the comics, the toys or even the movies (why?), it's sure to be a fun event. ●

<https://tfnation.com/2016>

COMING UP

UK GAMES EXPO

3-5 June
 Love roleplaying, cards, tabletop games and more? Then this Birmingham-based Expo is the place to be, with talks, tournaments and a large trade fair.
www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk

THE MEDUSA CHRONICLES EVENT

4 June
 SFX joins forces with the Arthur C Clarke Award and the Charing Cross branch of Foyles to bring top authors Stephen Baxter and Alastair Reynolds together to talk about their follow up to *A Meeting With Medusa*, *The Medusa Chronicles*.
www.foyles.co.uk/events

RETURN OF THE GARRISON

25-26 June
 Leicester's National Space Centre will be paying tribute to *Star Wars* at this two-day event, with appearances from Dave Prowse, Julian Glover and more.
<http://bit.ly/SFXgarrison>

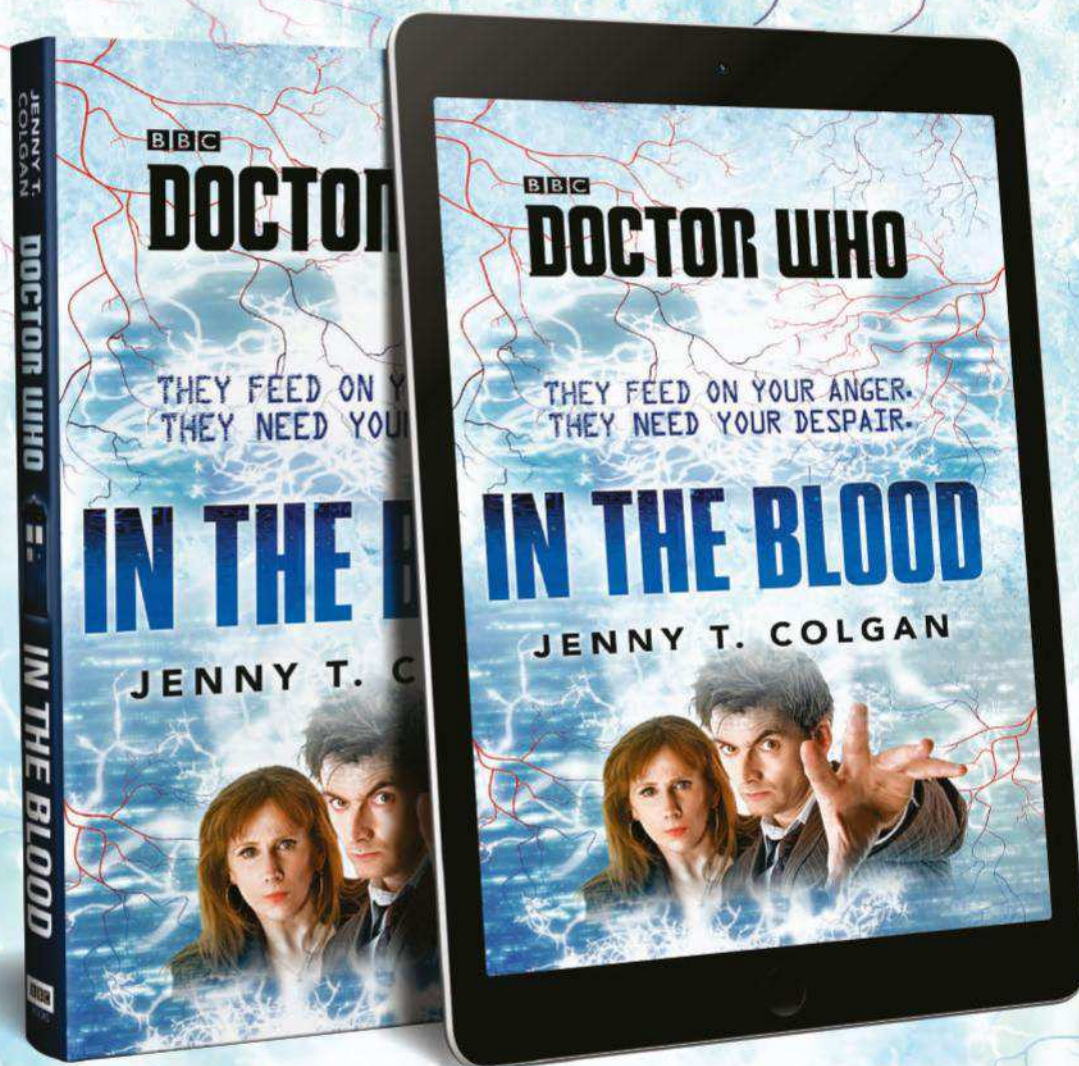
EDGE LIT 16

16 July
 This literary SF, fantasy and horror con will be taking over Derby Market Place. Guests include M John Harrison, Emma Newman, Paul Cornell and more.
<http://bit.ly/SFXedge>

FRIGHTFEST

25-29 August
 The venerable horror film festival will be taking over Shepherd's Bush for this year's event.
www.frightfest.co.uk

**All over the world a mysterious
sickness is spreading through
the internet.**



**Can the Tenth Doctor and Donna save
the world before it's too late?**

OUT NOW

An original novel featuring the Tenth Doctor and Donna,
as played by David Tennant and Catherine Tate.



© BBC 1996. Doctor Who logo © BBC 2009. Licensed by BBC Worldwide Limited.



SCI-FACT! The re-used "Into The Dalek" footage comes seven seconds in and shows Rusty the Dalek's distinctive blaster.

Bill: sign
o' the times.

THE NEW COMPANION!

BILL'S ONBOARD

Meet the new *Doctor Who* companion played by Pearl Mackie...



The next *Doctor Who* companion has arrived.

On 23 April, the BBC aired a new scene in the half-time break of the FA Cup semi-final, entitled "Friend From The Future". In it, we were introduced to Pearl Mackie as Bill (or asBILL, as the on screen text actually read), the companion who will be replacing Jenna Coleman when the show returns. The actress was previously best known for appearing in the stage production of *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time*. The scene was certainly short and snappy, but while it didn't give much away about Bill's character, there were a few nuggets of information to be gleaned...

She's funny: There's a slight Donna vibe to some of Bill's irreverent dialogue with the Doctor. She's observant (instantly clocking that the Dalek might be too "fat" to reach them) but while she mocks their appearance, she doesn't seem as cocky as Clara. Mackie has described her character as "Fantastically written, cool, strong, sharp, a little bit vulnerable with a bit of geekiness thrown in."

She might be from the past: Could Bill be from the 1980s? Her faded denim jacket, WOW! patch and Prince t-shirt all reek of the decade. Then there's the Doctor's line, "We need to get back to the future. 2017 needs us," and Bill's excited expression. Surely she wouldn't look that thrilled if he was just taking her home...

The name game: Casting director Andy Pryor has revealed that the code word used to refer to Mackie throughout the casting process was "Mean Town" – an anagram of Ten Woman, in reference to Bill starring in the 10th season.

A glimpse at the future: So is this a self-contained short? Apparently not. The iPlayer blurb describes it as "an exclusive scene from a future episode" – which is surprising as filming on the series hadn't begun at that point, and it contains recycled footage from "Into The Dalek". *Doctor Who Magazine* have since confirmed, however, that it *will* form part of a future episode.

When will we see Bill next? The only *Doctor Who* episode broadcasting in 2016 will be the Christmas special, but there's been no confirmation that it's Bill's debut. So will we have to wait until the 2017 series to find out more about the TARDIS's new occupant? It's looking likely. Whenever she starts, Pearl is excited to be a part of the show, saying, "Peter [Capaldi] is such a brilliant actor, and his Doctor is such a wacky and wonderful character. I can't wait to see what adventures are in store for him and Bill". ●

Doctor Who returns at Christmas.



SCI-FACT! Jiang Wen's character is also in the trailer, running from an explosion, blasting away and looking cool.

STAR WARS: ROGUE ONE

OUT
16 DEC
2016

The first standalone "Star Wars Story" promises a tough new edge



➤ Meet Jyn Erso, a hardened loner who appears to be very skilled at killing Stormtroopers, now working with the Rebellion.



➤ Genevieve O'Reilly returns as Mon Mothma (she played the character in *Revenge Of The Sith*, but was removed from the final cut).



➤ Here's Diego Luna's so far unnamed character – a Rebel soldier (rank insignia suggests a captain) who goes with Jyn on her mission...



➤ And that mission? To steal the blueprints for the Death Star, the secret weapon the Emperor has planned since *Revenge Of The Sith*.



➤ Ben Mendelsohn plays a senior Imperial. The white uniform hints at the Grand Admiral rank from the old Expanded Universe stories.



➤ Forest Whitaker plays another unnamed character, thought to be a bounty hunter who, for a change, is helping the Rebellion.



➤ Rumoured to be "Death Troopers", these sinister guys are reminiscent of the Shadow Troopers from the old Expanded Universe.



➤ Jyn and a droid (likely to be Alan Tudyk's motion capture character) flee, in a scene shot at Canary Wharf tube station in London.



➤ Martial artist Donnie Yen plays a blind character who, from the trailer, appears to still be very skilled at kicking Imperial arse.



➤ The Emperor's Royal Guard suggests that we might see Palpatine. But who's that kneeling? It probably isn't Vader, who doesn't wear a hood...



➤ Now that's a *Star Wars* shot! AT-ATs gun down Rebels on a beach, in a scene that suggests an edgier tone than its predecessors.



➤ Jyn in an Imperial (TIE Fighter pilot?) uniform, eh? Is she a traitor or simply undercover on the Death Star? We suspect the latter.

The Buzz



RICH Looks like another first-rate bit of *Star Wars* action – faithful to the original movie's era, but with enough tweaks (new-look AT-ATs!) to keep things fresh. I'm very excited.



WILL Excited to see the many different Stormtrooper variants and that klaxon is terrifying. The shadow of the Death Star's weapon being installed is a gorgeous visual too.



CATHERINE Go Felicity Jones – another great female lead in the *Star Wars* universe. Love the shot of the AT-ATs on the beach. Who knew you can visit the Death Star by going on the Jubilee Line?



NICK This is far from the charm-assault of the *Force Awakens* campaign – no cute droids or old pals to be seen. A leaner, meaner *Star Wars*, trading on familiar iconography without nostalgia.

DEVELOPMENT HELL

A vibrant, cartoonish illustration of a giant blue whale with a large, open mouth showing sharp teeth, attacking a city. A man in a white shirt and blue pants is being thrown into the air by the whale's breath. Several small boats, including a red one labeled 'A Small Boat' and a yellow one, are in the water. A submarine is visible in the upper right corner. The background shows a city skyline with a bridge.



MEG

sequels under strict laboratory conditions. Look, there's another one bubbling up in a Petri dish. Friskier than Tribbles, these things. Yes, no less than four – four! – more *Avatar* movies are on their way, staking out Christmas release slots in 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023. “We have decided to embark on a truly massive cinematic process,” declares Cameron, a crazed, potentially

world-ending glint in his eye. "So far, the art I'm seeing is, in pure imagination, really far beyond the first film. It's going to be a true epic saga." The plan is to shoot all four films as one huge production. "We're working, essentially, across eight hours of story," Cameron reveals. "It's more the way you would shoot a miniseries." That's an industrial amount of blue pixels...

WILLING AND CABLE!

DEADPOOL 2

It's official – the Merc with a Mouth has scored a sequel. Yes, just when you thought it was safe to build the fourth wall again, Twentieth Century Fox has greenlit the encore to February's preposterously profitable franchise-launcher. And they've reunited the winning team: director **Tim Miller**, writers **Rhett Reese** and **Paul Wernick** and, of course, star **Ryan Reynolds**. This time Deadpool will tangle with classic X-verse character Cable, a telepathic mutant soldier from a future timeline who's – potentially – the adult son of Scott Summers and Jean Grey's clone (do write in if you need an information pack). "It's the same reason we had Colossus [in the first film]," Miller tells *IGN*. "He's a straight man. And I think Deadpool needs a straight man. Cable is the ultimate, archetypal, silent, strong and cynical warrior, which Deadpool is not." Expect the snark to fly either late 2017 or early 2018.

FAST EXIT!

THE FLASH

The Fastest Man Alive is looking for a new helmer. **Seth Grahame-Smith** was all set to write and direct the scarlet speedster's solo movie as part of Warner Bros's Marvel-baiting battleplan to bring the DCU to the big screen. Now he's gone, departing the project in a supersonic blur of "creative differences". Just look at that dust! The project will keep his screenplay – based on a treatment by **Phil Lord** and **Christopher Miller** – and **Ezra Miller** is still the man in the streamlined spandex, on target for a 16 March



→ **Alicia Vikander** is Lara Croft in the *Tomb Raider* reboot...

Mark Millar's *American Jesus*, *Supercrooks* and *Empress* all heading to the screen... **Daisy Ridley** reteaming with JJ Abrams on fantasy romance *Kolma*... **Warren Beatty** still planning *Dick Tracy 2*... **Jamie Foxx** in talks for Henson movie *Happytime Murders*... **Dwayne Johnson** joining Sony's *Jumanji* remake... *The Impossible* and *A Monster Calls*... **JA Bayona** confirmed to direct *Jurassic World 2*... **Antonio Campos** in the frame to direct prequel *The First Wives Club*... **Mark Rylance** signed for Spielberg's *Ready Player One*... **The Craft** getting a belated sequel... **Sylvia Hooks** joining *Blade Runner 2*... Sony planning *Goosebumps 2*... **Justin Lin** helming *Space Jam 2*... **Jeremy Irons** returning as Alfred in *Justice League: Part One*... Marvel's *Inhumans* pulled from July 2019 release date... **Russell Crowe** to play Dr Henry Jekyll alongside **Tom Cruise** in *The Mummy* reboot... **Channing Tatum** joining *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*... **Jackie Earle Haley** joining *The Dark Tower*... **Doug Jones** starring in the *Nosferatu* remake...



“The art I’m seeing is, in pure imagination, far beyond the first film”

2018 release. Director **James Wan**, meanwhile, has scotched speculation that he's poised to bail on July 2018's *Aquaman* in the aftermath of *Batman V Superman: Jar Of Wee*'s decidedly mixed reaction. And **Ben Affleck** is now officially a lock to write and direct that standalone Batman movie on the Warner slate. Word is we'll see an entire Arkham's worth of classic Bat-villains in this one. Crazy Quilt! Kite Man! Mister Camera! You're gonna be in showbiz!

ZOINKS!

S.C.O.O.B.

Just how many shared universes can the cinematic multiverse hold before reality itself suffers a quantum meltdown? Brace yourselves. We may be about to find out. Warner Bros has just declared that the upcoming reboot of its dormant Scooby-Doo franchise – titled *SCOOB*, no less, hinting at a SHIELD-styled superspy makeover for the ghoulish-making hippies – is its "first shot at unlocking the whole Hanna-Barbera universe." Just imagine it: *Top Cat Vs Huckleberry Hound: Dawn Of Snagglepuss*... *The Jetsons: Age Of Flintstone*... *Captain Caveman: Squiddly Diddly War*... Face it, who needs Ant-Man when we have Inch High, Private Eye? *SCOOB* is targeting a 21 September 2018 release. Expect the Large Hadron Collider to implode shortly afterwards.

STARK CHOICE!

SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

Everyone's favourite billionaire industrialist playboy has scored another payday. **Robert Downey**

Jr will play Tony Stark in the Sony-Marvel lovechild *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, continuing the relationship established in *Captain America: Civil War* and strengthening the new film's ties to the MCU. This reboot of the reboot will spare us the well-worn origin story in favour of charting the Webslinger's journey to superherohood, as interpreted by young **Tom Holland**. "There are events that made Peter who he was, and we'll certainly allude to those," Marvel's **Kevin Feige** tells *Collider*, "but we're much more focused on the future and how he continues to grow and have a steep learning curve after the adventure he had in *Civil War* on how to be his own hero." Also joining the movie are *One Life To Live*'s **Laura Harrier** and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*'s **Tony Revolori**, as well as pop star **Zendaya**. But don't look for **Michael Keaton** to bring some Batman vs Spider-Man meta-textuality: he's passed on the chance to play the villain, rumoured to be the Vulture.

CLAWING IT BACK!

WOLVERINE 3

A blitz of casting news for the third Wolverine movie (or maybe the second if we all agree to believe 2009's *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* was simply an act of mass psychosis). *Narcos* star **Boyd Holbrook** will face **Hugh Jackman** as the film's lead villain, described as "a relentless, calculating and intense head of security for a global enterprise who is set against Wolverine." Also signed are *The Office*'s **Stephen Merchant** – at 6' 7" surely an inspired, counter-intuitive piece of casting for X-Men character Puck? – and the mighty sneer of **Richard E Grant**, who's said to be playing a villainous mad scientist type. **Patrick Stewart** is also in the mix as Professor X. **James Mangold** directs from a screenplay by **David James Kelly** and filming kicks off in May, with locations set to include New Orleans and New Mexico. It's meant to be Jackman's farewell to the claws, but as a wise Scotsman once said, never say never again... ●



Illustration by Paul Cemmick



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Jeff the Cabbie

Mycroft/Producer, writer

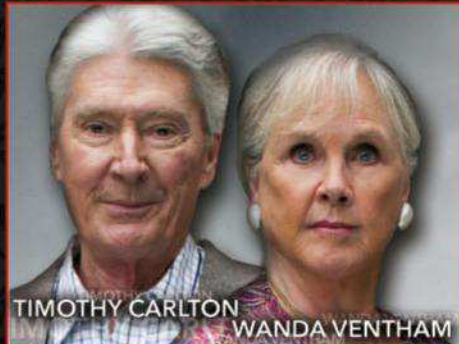
Janine Donlevy

Major James Sholto

Emelia Ricoletti (The Bride)

Producer

Executive Producer/writer



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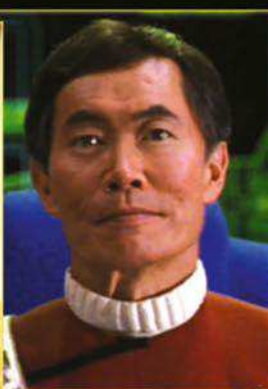


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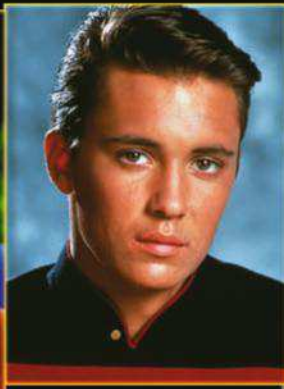
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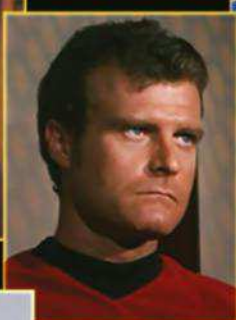
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//// SFX HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN! ////

First Contact



THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

**RICHARD EDWARDS,
EDITOR**



After the let-down of *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of*

Justice (for most people – some of you actually quite liked it), you had loads of ideas for this month's Hot Topic, where we asked you where DC should take its cinematic universe next. Our timing was also good for the announcement of a new *Doctor Who* companion – but whose idea was it to reveal her identity in the middle of an FA Cup semi-final? And why didn't Gary Lineker and co offer up some pithy half-time Dalek analysis? Maybe they're *Star Trek* men...

SFX Hot Topic *Your views on the month's big issue*

#WHAT SHOULD DC MOVIES DO NEXT?

➔ **Keith Tudor, email** Like most, I was unimpressed with *Batman V Superman*. However, the DC Cinematic Universe should still continue. They should remember who their characters are and remain true to them, but they can be dark and sombre with it, as theirs is a different take on the lighter superhero movies of Marvel.

➔ **Whitney Wylie, email** Do a Lex Luthor solo movie. What's so cool about the DC Universe is that the villains are as great as the superheroes are. I loved Jesse Eisenberg's performance. *SFX Thanks for writing, Mr Eisenberg – your clever pseudonym didn't fool us for a second.*

OrangePumpkin, Facebook The biggest mistake that Zack Snyder made in *BvS* was that he did not allow all the characters to be themselves, something that Marvel completely understand. The DC Universe has some great characters

and stories, so it doesn't need to change things a great deal. Why did they darken and stiffen Superman when they should just have let him be his so-called boy scout self, as a contrast to the dark and brooding Batman. As for Lex, he should be the evil bald genius he is in most of the comics, not the long-haired teen nut job Jessie Eisenberg played.

Ian Salsbury, Facebook There was too much going on in *BvS* at the expense of characterisation. And have Superman smile occasionally – I'd like to believe he enjoys helping people rather than seeing it as an obligation!

➔ **Emmet O'Brien, Facebook** Let Superman be fun. Let Batman be clever. Let the films be hopeful. Let Zack Snyder find the exit.

SFX They really don't want to let Superman be Superman, do they? I don't remember "intense scowling" being on his list of superpowers.

➔ **Graeme White, Facebook** Make some family-friendly movies. They may be PG-13/12A, but they're not really suitable for kids, tonally.

➔ **Laurie McHale, Facebook** Don't be afraid of levity or good humour. Don't fall into the traps of "edgy for edgy's sake" and "dour = mature".

SFX Rumour has it the upcoming extended cut of Dawn Of Justice features loads of scenes of Batman and Superman doing stand-up.



A Lex Luthor for the 21st century? Perhaps not.

**Get in touch!**

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“Let Superman be fun. Let Batman be clever. Let Zack Snyder exit”

👤 **Jim Covert-illy, Facebook** A series of street-level Batfleck detective stories in the tone of the Arkham games would be a good move.

👤 **Wayne Cowie, Facebook** Give it to the guys who do the animated stuff. That simple.

SFX Great idea. You'll kind of get your wish later this year with the R-rated adaptation of The Killing Joke.

👤 **Dicky Crisps, Facebook** They've tried to edit *Suicide Squad* [s trailers] to resemble *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, so they'll be after their own *Deadpool* next. Coming in 2018: *Blue Devil*!

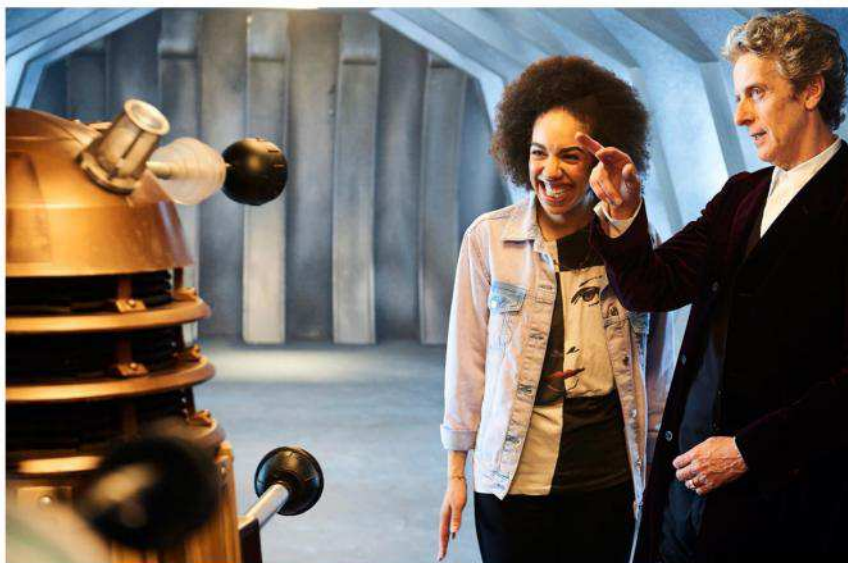
👤 **Adam Worrall, Facebook** Scrap it, then give it six years and start afresh with a new vision.

👤 **John Curr, Facebook** Bin the movies; stick to TV.

👤 **Paul Chinn, Facebook** Continue on this path! Don't try and make it a competition with Marvel. Loved that *BvS* was different from the joke-filled, toy-selling action romp *Avengers* was.

SFX In the interests of balance, we thought it was important to show there really are some people out there who like Dawn Of Justice.

Look out for
the next SFX
Hot Topic at
bit.ly/SFXHotTopic



The Doctor tells the one about the eye stalk.

#WHO'S THAT PEARL?

👤 **Medium Atomic Weight, email**

So Pearl Mackie is the Doctor's new companion? Nothing personal, she seems sparky and spirited and the brief trailer shows a lot of promise. But why oh why does *New Who* continue to deny the Doctor a male companion? Sure, we've had Mickey and Rory but they were always the Doctor's companion's companion, and they knew it. Some of the very best companions over the years have been male. Ian Chesterton was essential in introducing us to the mysterious First Doctor's strange, alien lifestyle. Nobody can deny the comradeship between the Second Doctor and Jamie, who wasn't afraid to challenge the Doctor's ambiguous moral choices when needed. Turlough, Ben, Adric and the UNIT mob all added valuable testosterone to the TARDIS control room. So don't tell me a male companion can't work in *New Who*. What a shame the Moff wasn't brave enough to really shake up the dynamic of the show in his final season.

👤 **Don Mortell, Facebook** Having been a fan since the 1960s (yup, was a geek before "geek" was even a thing!), I think the show has been losing ground over the past few years. Thumping good storytelling

being replaced by ever loudening music and, in truth, amazing CGI and effects. I think Mr Capaldi is a fabulous actor and I wish Miss Mackie the best of success in her role. I'm sure she is a fine actor but I'm of the opinion that the best days of the reboot are long behind it. Mr Capaldi's passion for the role is evident but he is being badly served by weak, fluffy, vague scripts and completely confusing story arcs. The announcement of Ms Mackie's arrival a year prior to a new series is frankly bizarre. Are we being given a full 12 months to build our breathless excitement?

👤 **Simon Rolfe, Facebook** I get a bit of an Ace feeling about her – and I like that. I always liked Sylvester McCoy's last season. Very much looking forward to these new episodes when they finally arrive.
SFX It's too early to make a call on Pearl Mackie's Bill, I reckon. The most important question right now is whether her introduction with the Daleks is canon or not.

#DC DOES IT

👤 **Gary Gibson, email** Oh dear, I should've guessed it. As totally predictable as the appearance of a Marvel post-credits sequence, DC-Hater Supreme Nick Setchfield gets to review *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*. ➔



Ben and Zack plot doom, death and destruction.

First Contact

Summer
2016



Either characters from Tim Burton's new film or the remaining members of his fan club.

At least I'm not the only one who has picked up on the unfair blasting this movie is getting from most critics, mainly because it isn't deemed "fun – like Marvel".

Mr Setchfield simply can't stop himself, though – witness his "gloomy" jibe in relation to the forthcoming Aquaman movie and the "omnisuck" comment in "The Batfleck Rises" – both in Development Hell. I'm assuming the reference to the "dour" Dawn Of Justice in Image Bank is Mr Setchfield's work, too? [Nope – Ed] I recall him slating the first trailers for Dawn Of Justice in 2015, no doubt sharpening his knife even then. I'd be the first to admit that Batman V Superman: Dawn Of

Justice had its flaws, but I've seen far worse Marvel productions.

It's a shame that a superhero movie that dares to be different to Marvel receives such a perfunctory response from your magazine.

Anyone else in favour of banishing Mr Setchfield to the Phantom Zone before he can get his hands on Suicide Squad? **SFX Nick won't be going to the Phantom Zone on my watch! Not sure where you got the idea he's a DC-hater – he's a long-term fan of Batman and Superman (he liked Superman Returns!) and his very fair BvS review came from the point of view of a fan massively disappointed by what he was seeing on screen. Believe me, we'd all have liked Batman V Superman to be a lot better than it was – what a waste of material!**

#IT'S ABOUT TIM

Carl Roberts, Hinckley I have just read in issue 274 the Freeze Frame article on Tim Burton's *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* and there are a couple of comments from your team that I just couldn't ignore. Rich says this is a "return to form for Burton". Didn't he see the fantastic *Alice In Wonderland* and, admittedly the not so fantastic, but still fun and

entertaining, *Dark Shadows*? Then Will went on to say "I wish Burton would break away from his visual tropes and make something low-key like *Ed Wood*". Did he not see the fabulous *Big Eyes*?

Okay so I may be biased as I am a huge Tim Burton fan and I realise his work may not be to everyone's taste, but doesn't every director have their own niche?

SFX I used to love Burton in the days of Beetlejuice, Batman and Edward Scissorhands. I've even got a soft spot for his Charlie And The Chocolate Factory. But it's a long time since I've been able to see the movie beyond those trademark Burton quirks. Alice In Wonderland left me totally cold.

#PLAYING THE GAME

Rik Laan, the Netherlands I skipped the cover feature of *SFX* 271, because I was reading the last (available) novel of *A Song Of Ice And Fire* at the time. I haven't seen the fifth season of *GoT* yet, but I thought it was safe to read the article (and the one in *SFX* 273) now I've finished reading *A Dance With Dragons*. I was wrong.

Stannis is dead? No, he isn't (yet), he's stuck in the snow! Arya is still blind? SPOILER No, she's not (any more). Sansa married to

Ramsay Bolton? That one is totally wrong, it should be "pretend Arya", who was one of Sansa's maids!

Apparently the only (major) things they got right last season were Cersei's walk of shame and the stabbing of Jon Snow.

It seems the novels and the TV-series are already quite different things. I'm still thinking Robb Stark's unborn child will be the last best hope for Westeros. But what do I know? Like you lot, probably I know nothing.

SFX You'll never guess what's happened to Jon Snow...

#BACK ON TREK

Alexander Edwards, email I think it's the perfect time for *Star Trek* to grow up, and take advantage of the world we now live in.

All good science fiction takes something in our lives and creates a world where things are different, and then explores the implications. This was the basis for a lot of episodes from *Next Gen*, and harks back perfectly to that core idea of exploring.

I think we now live in a world where a starship crew could spend three to 10 episodes trying to help solve a morally complicated situation. It's also time for characters to go on real journeys of their own. Just like *Battlestar Galactica*, the characters at the end can resemble who they were



C'mon, someone crack a smile!



Arya in *Game Of Thrones*: facing up to Stark realities.

“I think it’s the perfect time for *Star Trek* to grow up”

at the beginning, but evolved, and shaped by their experience.
SFX *The word on the street is that showrunner Bryan Fuller’s looking at a more anthology-ish take on Trek with his new TV show, so you may get your wish for longer form Trek storytelling. Let’s not forget to keep it fun though, eh?*

#WE ALSO HEARD FROM

Chloeyoshifan2, email I was curious as to why you have not reviewed the second season of *Dominion*, seeing that the season two DVD came out in the UK in this month, and in the US a few months earlier. I wanted to see what the people at *SFX* thought of it, and what they thought of the cancellation.
SFX *Alas, there’s so much sci-fi out there that we can’t review everything we’d like to. And given the general sense of meh about Dominion emanating from SFX Towers, Dominion 2 didn’t make the cut. Our reaction to its cancellation? Unsurprised...*

Mike Garner, Moorends Is *Lucifer* based on the Mike Carey epic? If so its the worst comic book adaption ever. If not, it’s frustratingly enjoyable.

Jenny Scragg, email Just reading through issue 273, and came across the “Don’t Quote Me” from Leslie Jones – “why can’t a regular person be a Ghostbuster?” Am I the only person on the planet who remembers that Winston Zeddemore was not a scientist either? Clearly the makers of the new trailer have forgotten (unless Winston was given an honorary qualification after the movie)!
SFX *Winston definitely isn’t a scientist in the original movie – that “30 years ago, four scientists saved New York” line in the first Ghostbusters trailer is utter nonsense. Do your research, trailer people!*



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“Where does dick end and idiot begin?”

Wishlist

WHAT YOU WANT TO
SEE IN UPCOMING
MOVIES AND TV

LABYRINTH

The fantasy classic is returning for a fresh round of slime and snails and puppy dogs' tails... *Illustration by Paul Cemmick*

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

SEQUEL? REBOOT? WE DON'T YET KNOW WHAT FORM THE NEW MOVIE WILL TAKE, BUT OUR READERS HAD A FEW THOUGHTS...

DON'T TRY AND RECAST JARETH

1 A recurrent theme throughout your comments was that while the sequel/reboot/whatever-it-turns-out-to-be *should* feature another charismatic villain, possibly another musician, it shouldn't be Jareth. **Darren Thomas** said, "Don't try and replace Bowie – you can't. If you have to pick another goblin leader, how about a woman? Lady Gaga is eccentric enough and has the star power"

MAKE A SEQUEL, NOT A REBOOT

2 You were also very clear that a sequel would be *much* preferred over a reboot of the original. "Make it a sequel," says **Graeme White**. "Have Jareth be dead and gone and Toby the heir to the goblin throne. Have him work alongside Sarah and her friends in trying to depose whoever has claimed the throne."

FOCUS ON THE NEXT GENERATION

3 There's a lot of demand for Jennifer Connelly to return, but you were also clear that the film should appeal to a new

generation. **Peter Riby** said, "I'd love some ties to the original movie's characters – perhaps Sarah could now have a teenage son or daughter who's dragged into the Labyrinth."

GO MAD WITH THE PUPPETS

4 The genius of the original lies in the puppets made by Jim Henson's Creature Shop – and you want to see more. **Tomas Becks** demanded, "Henson puppets! The more, the merrier! The FX in the original are a bit dated, so that's a necessary upgrade, just don't touch the puppets! And don't be afraid to go a bit dark."

GET THE CREATORS BACK

5 You were very keen for as many of the original creative team to return as possible. **Hannah Rowe** suggested that "Terry Jones should write the script again! It needs to keep the original's anarchic sense of humour", while **Iain L** states that "Brian Froud's designs were so integral to the original movie that it wouldn't be *Labyrinth* if he doesn't come back."

And that's not all they want...

→ **John P** They should use puppets as much as possible and cram in as many crazy ideas as they can.

→ **Heather Alison** Hoggle and Ludo have started a reign of terror in the Labyrinth, and they need to be overthrown.

→ **David Waxx** *Labyrinth* hasn't got a good story. Its selling point was boundary-pushing effects; and the remake wouldn't live up to that. Imagine if they made the story worse though...

→ **Carl Gibson** Less lunchbox!

→ **Andy Baxter** Maybe we can learn more about the Goblin King's history. Is there a whole Goblin Royal House? Do they battle for the crown? Lots of storytelling potential in that backstory.

→ **Leo Lorusso** Jennifer Connelly!

→ **Gerry Gaffney** A slightly detached sequel may work or possibly a darker, grittier prequel about how the Goblin King came to power and got his singing voice.

→ **Lee Hodgkinson** Get Jennifer Connelly back again and merge the storyline with her *Requiem For A Dream* character – we find out she was just on a drug-fuelled fantasy all along.

→ **Sham Zaman** A beautiful fantasy epic that will expand the universe with loveable relatable characters that will be passed down the generations as an example of what film is capable of. Not much then.

→ **Jack Woodgate** A reboot or retelling of the story would also be

problematic. Looking at *Labyrinth* through 21st century eyes is quite creepy. You've basically got a 15-year-old girl being hit on by an older man (played by a rock star).

→ **Harry P** Yes! Do remake it! But do it *well*, make it a *good* film – because you know what, the original's rubbish. Childish rubbish. There, I've said it.

Plus many, many variations of...

→ **Fran Donohoe** Nothing, just don't do it, leave it alone.

→ **Nathan Paul Kennedy** I wish it wasn't happening, and I won't spend a penny on watching it.

→ **Stephen Pasqua** I want to see it canned for the stupid idea that it is!

→ **Zvezdan Karasi** Just leave things alone already!



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First Contact

Summer
2016

YOUR DREAM CAST

SARAH'S DAUGHTER

Elle Fanning

TOBY

Toby Froud

THE GOBLIN QUEEN

Lady Gaga

SARAH

Jennifer Connelly

COMING SOON

JUSTICE LEAGUE AND THE HAN SOLO STAR WARS MOVIE

Next issue we'll be finding out what you're looking for from DC's all-star line-up, then we'll be taking shots (and shooting first, naturally) at the Han Solo prequel.

See bit.ly/SFXwishlist for details.

Worlds Of SFX

There's a whole universe to explore beyond this magazine

THIS MONTH ON
gamesradar+



Five things to look out for on our massive entertainment portal at gamesradar.com/sfx

1 Get all the *Game Of Thrones* analysis you could ever want with our new TV programme, *Last Night's Watch*. Each week we'll cover what's happened in the show and what it means for the season as a whole. <http://bit.ly/SFXLastNightsWatch>

2 Forget Han Solo, this is why we want a movie about Obi-Wan Kenobi. There's no way he could have just lived in a cave for 20 years. <http://bit.ly/SFXObiWanKenobi>

3 Seen *Captain America: Civil War*? How many Easter eggs did you spot? Read all about the movie's most geek-tastic moments here. <http://bit.ly/SFXCivilWarEasterEggs>

4 If you thought you'd seen it all when it comes to crazy fan theories, you were wrong. Cleganebowl is the bizarre *Game Of Thrones* theory that just might come true in season six. <http://bit.ly/SFXCleganebowl>

5 With the very first solo live-action Wonder Woman movie on the way, we've been boning up on everything Diana Prince. From her most important comic book storylines, to her role in the Justice League movies, here's your Wonder Woman cheat sheet. <http://bit.ly/SFXWonderWoman>



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Magazines & Beyond

SFX ON THE RADIO!



→ The world's number one sci-fi and fantasy magazine – that's us – is embarking on an all-new mission in the audio frontier. Each month, *SFX* editor Richard Edwards is being

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→ Obviously picking up the latest *SFX* is one of the highlights of your month, but your fix of the world's number one sci-fi and fantasy magazine doesn't have to end there. Sign up

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TOTAL FILM



→ It's the end of the world as you know it! Prepare for x-treme x-citement (x-cetera) as *Total Film* heads on to the set of *X-Men: Apocalypse* to watch the mutants go up against their biggest foe yet. We chat to director Bryan Singer, plus stars Michael Fassbender, James McAvoy and Jennifer Lawrence, who reveal this '80s-set epic is the climax of all six X-flicks. Elsewhere, *TF* catches up with *Star Wars*' new hope Daisy Ridley, visits the set of *Warcraft* and checks out supernatural sequel *The Conjuring 2*. Grab a copy now... **ON SALE: NOW!**

1990s SPECIAL



→ From the makers of *SFX* and *Total Film* comes this celebration of the decade that delivered a whole host of terrific movies to our screens. So expect lavish features on the likes of *Jurassic Park*, *Independence Day*, *The Matrix*, *Speed*, *Reservoir Dogs* and *The Shawshank Redemption* on these big, shiny pages. What the hey, we've even got *The Phantom Menace* in there. Also, in a brand new feature we count up (or count down, take your pick) the 90 greatest things about the '90s. Fret not, John Major and Tony Blair aren't guest editors. **ON SALE: NOW!**

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THE QUANTUM THIEF

by Hannu Rajaniemi, 2010

Claire North on a place where quantum mechanics and magic collide

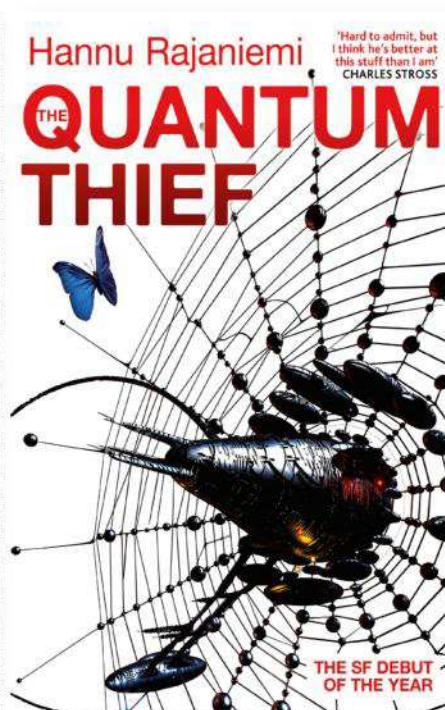


In a diamond prison floating through space, a man tries to convince a monster not to kill him again, while in the cell next door his clone luxuriates on a recliner and scoffs at the notion of redemption. Welcome to the Dilemma Prison, but don't get comfortable – barely have we arrived than our main character has died and been remade, eaten a self-replicating computerised jailor, and been abducted by a woman who may be possessed by a goddess. And that's just the warm-up.

Before you can blurt "Whoa there, the Sobornost warminds did what with a singularity on Jupiter?", *The Quantum Thief* is off, plunging into a universe of gogol pirates, ascended beings, nano-tech phoboi, celestial wars, sentient spaceships, weaponised quantum mechanics and expensive chocolate with a stomach-churning twist. Cities walk across the surface of Mars, and death is nothing more than a change in economic status; millions of copies of a single thought may become weapons or tools, or an amusing plaything in a corner of Zoku Realmspace.

If you were to say one thing about *The Quantum Thief*, "understated" would not be it.

And arguably that's a problem. *The Quantum Thief* has a lot to get to grips with, and throws events at the reader as readily as it drops references to past wars and culture-altering technologies. It can become frustrating, and you either have to engage meticulously, or shrug and allow the charm of the main characters and the momentum of the story to sweep you on. "Sure," proclaim our heroes, "we're now battling a floating vigilante for access to a planet's collective memory and the key that will



unlock the human soul, all in a day's work..."

Complex world-building is woven in with moments of trivia and beauty. Mieli, a woman so teched up that she has a nuclear reactor in her thigh, sang her somewhat snarky spaceship into existence out of an ice cloud. Jean de Flambeur, our rakish semi-hero, hid his own memories from himself, and can't even work out why he did it, or if he's ready to pay the price to get them back. As they plunge deeper into a Martian conspiracy, questions of identity,

privacy, society and the different paths humanity might choose to evolve down are mingled with the personal; failed relationships and broken dreams, matters of music, art, family and religion.

It's a novel that both delights in the possibilities of a post-humanity civilisation in flux, while at the same time retaining a quaint nostalgia. The Zoku may be technological gods, but their parties are pure celebrations of 1980s kitsch; Puss in Boots stalks the dreams of sleeping Martian women, while fashion among the Time-rich nobility harkens back to a time of Enlightenment-era decadence, complete with added robotic war machines.

In many ways *The Quantum Thief* is a celebration of Arthur C Clarke's maxim about advanced technology being indistinguishable from magic. If you care about multidimensional mathematics you'll probably have a whale of a time reading it; if not, then yes, basically, it was done with magic. But the book breezes along so easily that any cultural questions you may want to take from it are really down to the reader.

Charming and fascinating, intelligent and confounding, whether you are delighted by this rollercoaster or irritated that it doesn't slow down for the corners, either is a valid response, and something about the uncertainty of that in itself seems very apt for *The Quantum Thief*. ●

Claire North's The Sudden Appearance Of Hope is out now and reviewed on p112.

Like this? Try these!

THE LIES OF LOCKE LAMORA
by SCOTT LYNCH (2006)

→ If you enjoyed the charming rakes and dazzling colours of *The Quantum Thief*, this dials the joyful rogue factor up to 11.



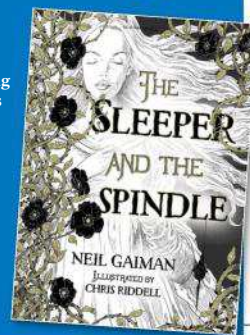
THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL ANGRY PLANET
by BECKY CHAMBERS (2015)

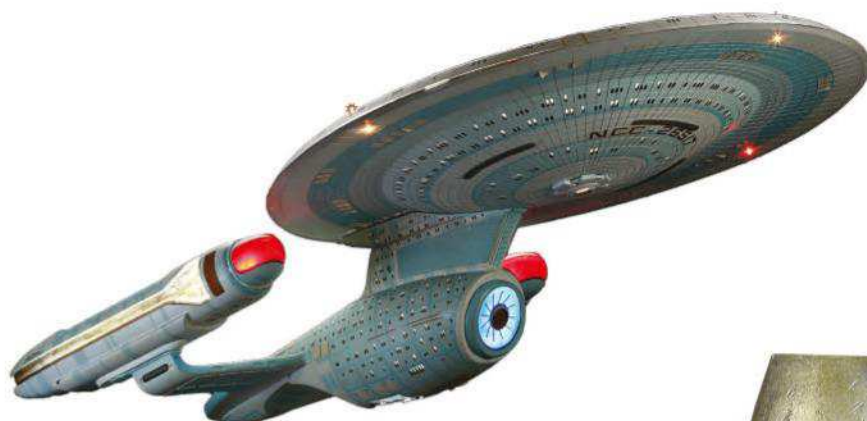
→ For sheer noise, bustle and hustle, Chambers's debut celebrates the possibilities of space via one small ship's journey through the galaxy.



NEXT ISSUE ↓

Our next Book Club outing (in SFX 276, on sale 22 June) sees Angela Slatter writing about Neil Gaiman's *The Sleeper And The Spindle*. Believe it or not, this will be our first ever Gaiman Book Club! So pick it up for the first time, or as a refresher, and see whether you agree with what a top author thinks about it.





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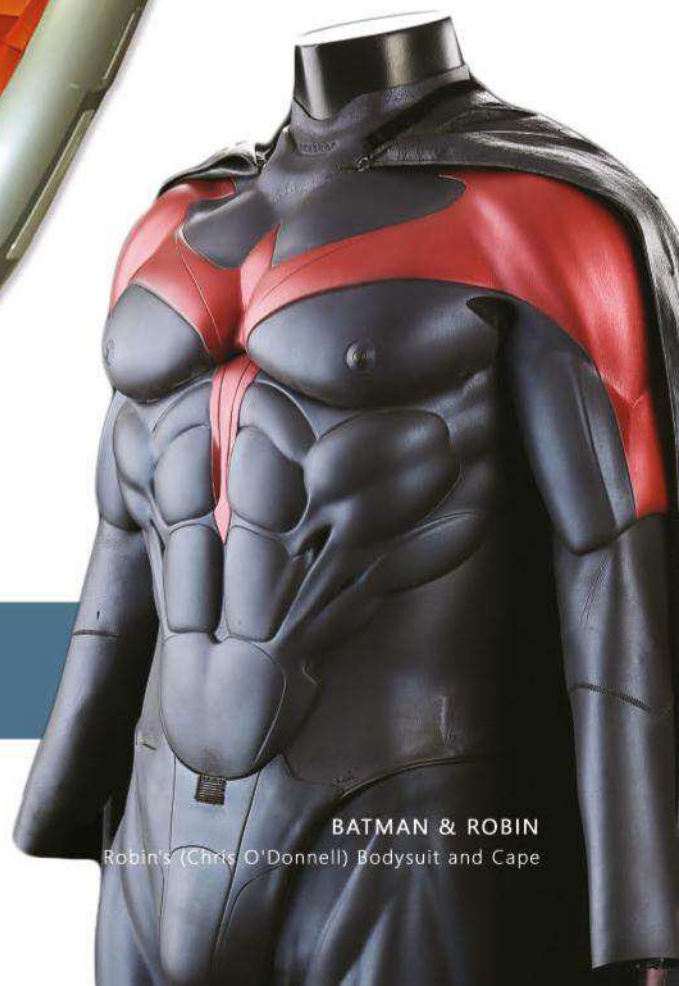


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RESULTS OPTIONAL

True Blood and *Midnight, Texas* author **Charlaine Harris** on the pleasures and pitfalls of having your novel adapted



“YOU MAY SHRIEK WITH HORROR AS ONE OF YOUR CHARACTERS IS ALTERED...”

I don't know of any writer who hasn't jumped for joy when one of her works has been optioned. Not only is it exciting to think of your work being translated into another medium, but the prospect of meeting people and seeing processes you've never gotten to witness is a real shot in the arm. Of course, your agent will advise you to calm down. Most options never come to anything. The typical 12-month contract will expire without anything coming of it in 300 cases, for every one option that advances a step farther.

I've been through this process several times, most recently with the *Midnight* books. Some of the results of the book-to-screen translation have been spectacular... or, depending on your viewpoint, at least notable. Some very noble attempts to get my other books to the screen have not had any results.

If you're going to attempt to walk this highwire, you need to have a good agent. Do not attempt to negotiate this yourself, no matter how intelligent you may be. There are so many pitfalls in the typical contract, and you don't want to tumble into one. You need an agent who specialises in book-to-film contracts, and you need to be aware of that agent's track record.

When the *Midnight* books attracted attention, I already had a great agency on my side. The TV deal was in the works while I was writing *Night Shift*, the third book about the inhabitants of a very weird and isolated town in Texas.

I've had such good luck with the *True Blood* HBO show, and the Hallmark adaptations of my *Aurora Teagarden* mysteries, that I am very hopeful about the *Midnight, Texas* pilot. Experience has taught me what to expect.

First, a certain segment of the reading public will accuse you of "selling out". I have yet to understand this accusation. What did I sell out? Is there some high moral position that precludes the chance to see my work reinterpreted?

After all, my books are still on the shelves, exactly as they were written. So the TV show or movie can hardly "ruin the books", another frequent observation.

The first approach to signing a deal with a network or production company is this: demand control of the process, demand that you approve the actors and the script, demand that you be on hand every moment of the production. If you take this stand, you will increase the chance of failure in the adaptation to 99.9%.

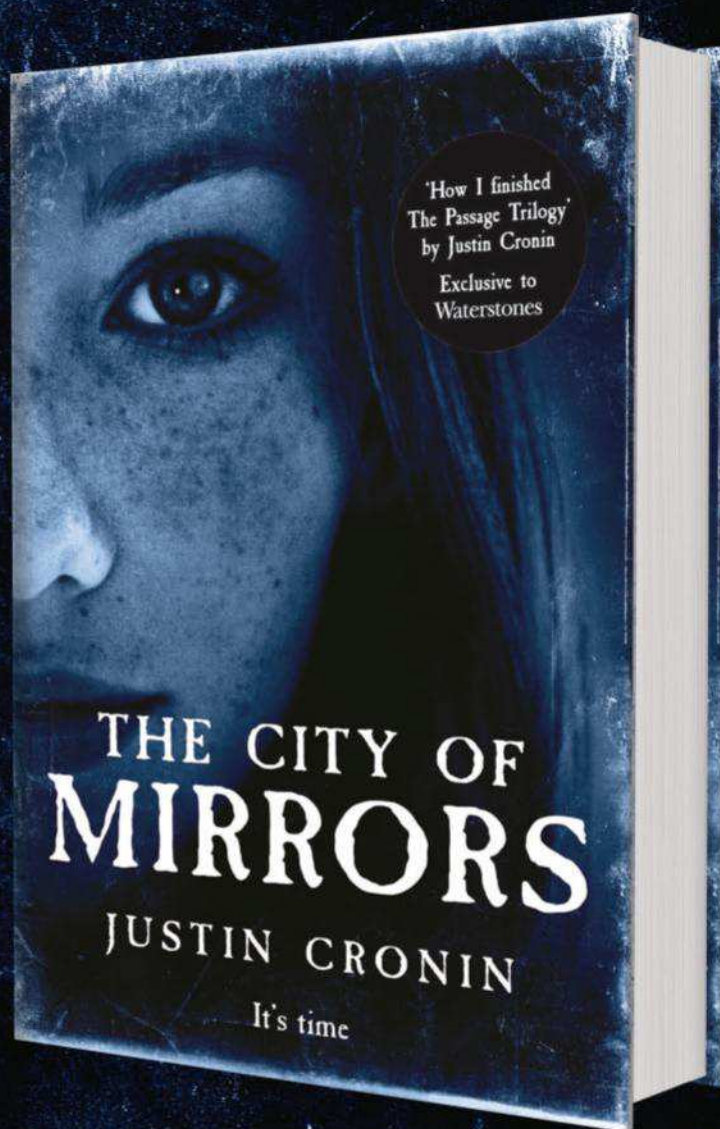
The second approach is most likely to result in an actual film. You evaluate the offer, based on the track record of the writer or producer or network. If you think they are reputable people who produce good work, and your agent and their legal department have hammered out an at least tolerable agreement, you accept their money and you walk away. You wait with interest and anticipation for the result. It will not be a duplicate of your book. The creative people who have made the film will have reinterpreted your work to make it suitable for the medium.

Of course, that's the approach that will have tangible results. You may shriek with horror as one of your characters is altered, and you may be astounded when you perceive what the filmmaker thought was your goal. But it is guaranteed to be interesting.

Now that *Night Shift* is on the shelves, I'm anxious to hear what readers think of it, and I'm optimistic that they'll be pleased. As for the television version? Well, the book is my baby, and the possible TV show is the bow on its head. ●

Charlaine Harris's latest novel, Night Shift, is out now.

It's time.



16.06.16

'One of the great achievements in American fantasy fiction' – Stephen King

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Penny Dreadful

SFX's high priestess of horror

THE INTERNET'S OWN BOY

➤ Could **The Slender Man** be the *Fifty Shades Of Grey* of horror? Not because it's grim and pervy (we had that first anyway – Christian Grey, meet Pinhead...), but because he's a phenomenon born of the internet, given life by fans, that's about to be made into what could be a major movie franchise. Slender Man was the brainchild of a horror forum user called Eric Knudsen. In 2009 he made a creepy Photoshop of a faceless bloke with long arms and a black suit herding a group of children, which he captioned with a bit of mythology about how the Slender Man abducted kids and made them do terrible things. The internet picked it up and ran with it, producing stories, comics, art and videogames around the character until he had a life of his own (so much so that in 2014 two 12-year-old girls who stabbed another 12-year-old claimed it was to please Slender Man. Though one of them also said she talked to Lord Voldemort and one of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.) Slender Man is a brand without a single piece of "official" commercial content so far. Screen Gems (owned by Sony) are in negotiations on the pic, and I'll be fascinated to see what they do.

DOWN WITH THE COOL KIDS

➤ Vampires and the antichrist are about to get indie-arthouse makeovers with two new movies on their way. *Drive* director Nicolas Winding Refn's **The Neon Demon** will premiere at Cannes in May – a dark tale set in the world of high fashion starring Elle Fanning. Expect glossy gore, beautiful people and a meandering pace. Then *The Omen* is getting a prequel with *Afterschool* and *Simon Killer* director Antonio Campos at the helm. Do we need another *Omen* movie (after diminishing returns on 1-4 and a rubbish remake)? No. But might this be good? Yes! It'll be called **The First Omen** and explore what happened before Damien's birth. Given that he was supposedly born of a jackal the mind boggles at exactly what weirdness this will entail. Campos's previous films were imbued with quiet menace, though, which could be just the thing to bring the franchise back to life.

New projects abound:
a supermodel vamp,
a modern urban
legend and a merman

Experiencing *The Neon Demon*.



Will the new *It* match up to the original?

More of those zombie types in *Cell*.

RETURN OF THE KING

➤ This month feels like it's been a bit of a Stephen King-athon. Not only is **It** back in the frame, with a September 2017 release date announced and *Mama* director Andres Muschietti replacing Cary Fukunaga, but also **The Dark Tower** is gaining traction with Matthew McConaughey and Idris Elba joined by new cast members Fran Kranz, Michael Barbieri and Katheryn Winnick. Plus I got a chance to check out **Cell** – out 26 August. It's okay. I wish I could wax more lyrical. John Cusack, Samuel L Jackson and *Orphan* star Isabelle Fuhrman are likeable leads, but as a whole it feels a bit cheap. The gist: a mobile signal causes everyone on their phones at that time to start attacking each other, zombie-style. Only as they evolve they're not zombies, they're more like ants working as a colony possessed by a mysterious stranger that Cusack seems to have had premonitions about. Interesting premise but the road movie structure – Cusack searching for his kid – is a bit tedious and the gut-punch setpiece ending is undermined by it being really dark (actually, not thematically).

UNDERWATER LOVE

➤ Guillermo del Toro's new movie is a Cold War romance about a merman! It's called **The Shape Of Water**. Richard Jenkins, Sally Hawkins and Octavia Spencer are thus far on board, and it might centre around a woman who falls in love with an amphibian in America in 1963. Okay, this is straight from the rumour mill. But let it be true! ●

Dreadful Old Movie

➤ Like Amicus movies but still not got a Blu-ray player? Then rejoice at the new DVD of *Dr Terror's House Of Horrors*, the studio's first portmanteau horror (a Blu-ray came out last November). It's loads of fun, with segments about a werewolf, a vampire, a creeping vine and a disembodied hand. It stars Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and Donald Sutherland, who was apparently paid £1,000 for his trouble...



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STRANGE DAYS



So just who is
**DOCTOR
STRANGE?**
With a movie on the
way, Nick Setchfield
casts the runes to
reveal the secrets of
Marvel's weirdest
superhero...





Doctor Strange wasn't the first occult-flavoured superhero in comic books. Notable predecessors include Zatara, who debuted alongside Superman in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938, fellow DC supernaturalist Dr Fate and dapper necromancer Mandrake the Magician, who starred in his own newspaper strip from 1934.



He wasn't the first master of the mystic arts in the Marvel Universe, either. **Doctor Droom** appeared in *Amazing Adventures* #1 in 1961. Later renamed **Doctor Druid**, his origin story shared elements with Strange's own. "I always liked [Doctor Droom], but I forgot about him," confessed Stan Lee.



Doctor Strange wasn't even Marvel's first Doctor Strange. *Tales Of Suspense* story "The Stronghold Of Doctor Strange" saw Iron Man battle a villainous scientist given mental powers by a freak lightning strike.

THE JOY OF HEX

The Sorcerer Supreme's five most reality-warping spells!

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Restraints an opponent but also enables interdimensional travel.

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Creates illusory visions, including duplicates of Doctor Strange for misdirection.

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May be used as an occult shield to shelter a large area from magical attack.

FLAMES OF THE FALTINE

Conjures defensive mystical fire but can also be deployed protectively.

THE MISTS OF MUNNOPOR

Unleashes an otherworldly blue gas with the power to suffocate. Check your cooker top.

This Doctor Strange appeared a mere two months before his sorcerous successor claimed the name.



Spider-Man artist **Steve Ditko** conjured the initial idea. "On my own, I brought in to Lee a five-page, pencilled story with a new, different kind of character for variety in Marvel Comics," the legendarily reclusive comics creator revealed in 2008. Back in 1963 Stan Lee admitted it was "Steve's idea and I figured we'd give it a chance."



Strange was named for the comic that birthed him. First published in 1951, *Strange Tales* traditionally delivered the kind of twist-packed, *Twilight Zone* style shockers that were Marvel's forte before the Fantastic Four changed everything. Lee toyed with christening him Mr Strange but thought it was too close to the FF's Mr Fantastic. →



Tilda Swinton's Ancient One clearly isn't for the old folks' home just yet.



Now that's a good cape.

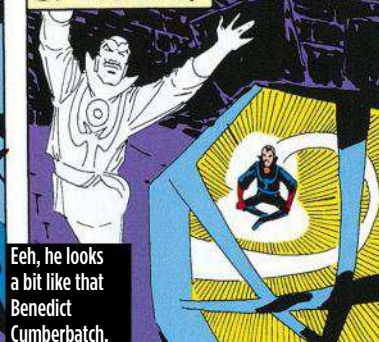


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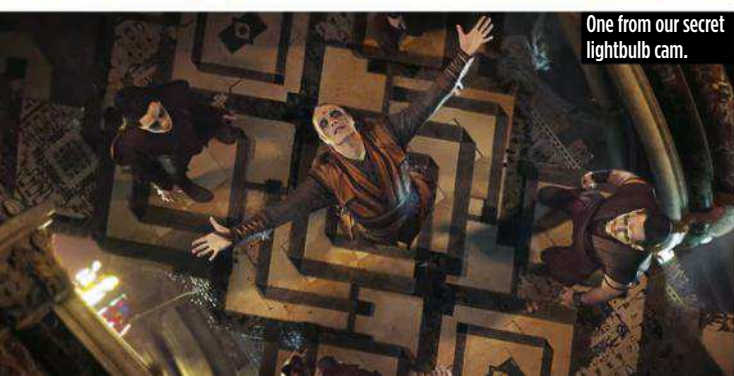
THAT IS ODD! THERE IS NO RESPONSE FROM THE ENCHANTED AMULET! IT CAN MEAN ONLY ONE THING--- THE MASTER IS IN TERRIBLE JEOPARDY!



DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THE MASTER'S SAFETY, DR. STRANGE ENTERS A TRANCE IMMEDIATELY AS HIS SPIRIT IMAGE STREAKS FOR TIBET--- WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT!



Eeh, he looks a bit like that Benedict Cumberbatch.



One from our secret lightbulb cam.

MAGIC WORDS

Meet comic book writer supreme
STEVE ENGLEHART



What excited you creatively when you were given Doctor Strange?

At that moment, it was simply a new place to play. I'd written Doc as part of the Defenders, where he was mostly a superhero who did magickal things, and I liked the idea of getting deeper into the magick stuff.

How much did your own interest in the occult shape the stories you were telling?

I had no interest in the occult at that moment. But I decided that, if I were going to write a credible Sorcerer Supreme, I should learn some stuff – and I found out that I liked what I was learning, so as each issue unfolded, I was more and more conversant in the art of real magick. Now, trying to incorporate real magick into a comic was tricky because I wasn't writing a treatise, but it crept in wherever it could, and the themes moved from big spectacular comic book concepts to big spectacular magickal concepts in comic book format.

There were some mind-frying ideas in your stories. Who were you writing for? Kids? Or the counter-culture?

Comics in those days were still under the Comics Code, which mandated that anyone from six to 60 could read them – and therefore, people who wanted to deal with subjects like magick, and drugs, and God, had to be oblique. That said, I was definitely writing for anyone who could appreciate a magickal world, whether they were six or 60. Doc went places that no one else did so his comics had that unique extra dimension (so to speak).

What was your take on Strange himself?

He was a guy who had retained a lot of his humanity (minus the egocentricity), but he (a) had a lot on his plate, and (b) knew a lot more than anyone else about his chosen field, so sometimes he had to be reminded about the humanity. Again, if the Avengers missed a menace, the FF could pick up the slack, but there was no backup for Doctor Strange; all that weight was on his shoulders alone.

We're finally about to see Doctor Strange on the big screen. What does the movie need to get right to honour the comic strip?

It's gotta be kozmik. This ain't Mandrake the Magician. Frankly, I know next to nothing about the film, but Benedict Cumberbatch is a great choice, because Strange has to be smart, and the trailers look suitably out there, and Marvel really seems to have gotten this whole movie thing under control, so I'm very hopeful that the film will live up to the comic.



He's a fully qualified doctor, though. His origin tale – told a full five issues after his debut in July 1963's *Strange Tales* #110 – revealed that he was formerly a gifted but bastardly neurosurgeon who lost his physical skills after smashing up his hands in a car crash. Spiralling into self-loathing, Strange became a drifter, his hunt for a cure leading him to the secret reaches of Tibet, in search of the fabled Ancient One, a seemingly immortal magus. Tilda Swinton plays the Ancient One in the movie, switching both the gender and the ethnicity of the comic book original.



The hidden, mystical Tibetan realm is a well-worn trope in adventure fiction, reaching all the way back to James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*, the bestseller that gave the world the concept of Shangri-La. It played into the origin of pulp adventurer the Shadow and was revisited on the big screen in 2005's *Batman Begins*.



The Ancient One already had a disciple – the nefarious Baron Karl Amadeus Mordo, who'll be brought to the big screen by Chiwetel Ejiofor (*12 Years A Slave*, *The Martian*). Foiling Mordo's plot to kill his master and discovering his own capacity for good, Strange became the Ancient One's favoured heir to the title of Earth's Sorcerer Supreme.



Studio head Kevin Feige calls it “a classic Marvel origin story... one of the best origins ever.” Director Scott Derrickson tells *USA Today*, “Strange is spiritually evolving through his pain and torment, and doing it through the experience of incredibly weird realities.”



Strange's sorcerous skill-set includes the power to astrally project, releasing a wraith-like version of himself onto higher planes of existence (we see Benedict Cumberbatch experience this phenomenon in the trailer after a spot of spook-fu from Swinton's Ancient One). His scarlet Cloak of Levitation lets him soar without the need for a flying spell. It's not all fey spell-casting, mind. Benedict Cumberbatch tells *Entertainment Weekly* that there's more rough and tumble in the film than you might imagine: “There's a huge amount of physicality. He's physically a very strong presence in the world.”



While Ditko plotted the stories Lee took care of the majestically purple dialogue. “Writing Dr Strange was a hoot because it gave me the opportunity to

EYE SPY

The secrets of Strange's awesome amulet

That's some seriously reality-bending bling Benedict Cumberbatch is rocking. Described by Strange himself as “one of the most powerful mystic conduits on the physical plane”, the amulet holds the All-Seeing Eye of Agamotto, a relic with the power to emit an “all-revealing light”, open a portal to the Dark Dimension and repel demonic entities. It's the creation of Agamotto the All-Seeing, one of the powerful extra-dimensional beings known as the Vishanti. Steve Ditko's original comic book design was inspired by the All Seeing Eye of the Buddha aka the Amulet of Snail Martyrs, a Nepalese totem that protects its wearer against evil. There's speculation that the Eye is one of the MCU's fabled Infinity Stones but studio supremo Kevin Feige will only say, “it has the ability to manipulate probabilities – which is another way of saying ‘screw around with time.’”

make up weird expressions for him to say,” he recalled. “I liked to make up my own nutty-sounding expressions such as ‘By the Hoary Hosts of Hoggoth, let the darkness shroud the light!’ or ‘By the Mystic Moons of Munnipor, may your weapons turns to sand!’”



Ditko delivered the most astonishing art of his career, loosing

Strange among extra-dimensional dreamscapes whose sheer psychedelic trippiness anticipated the '60s counter-culture. Lee praised his collaborator's “incredibly dramatic and magical style”, saying, “When we'd have the good doctor entering another dimension, Steve drew that

It's not all magic tricks and that – Doctor Strange and Baron Mordo run too!



dimension in such a way that you could believe it really existed. If any strip ever owed its flavour and individuality to an artist, this was the one."



Will Ditko's retina-popping realms translate to the big screen? The trailer gives us glimpses of kaleidoscoping rooms and *Inception*-style folding cityscapes but director Scott Derrickson promises even more to feed your head. "I was always interested in the extreme mind-bending visuals of the comics," he tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "I had very ambitious ideas for the visuals that were rooted in the comics, that movies haven't done yet. And a lot of that goes back to the Ditko artwork and all that '60s craziness you see in the comics." Kevin Feige tells *Screenrant*: "We like the idea of playing with alternate dimensions. The crazy Ditko acid trip way of travelling through dimensions is something that we think is very, very cool... playing with the perceptions of reality."



After Lee and Ditko departed the strip, Doctor Strange was given a brief and bizarre makeover, kitted out with a blue face mask to look more like a

traditional superhero and boost sales. He later became leader of the Defenders, an anarchic superteam that included the Hulk, the Sub-Mariner and the Silver Surfer in its freewheeling roster.



The next generation of creators took Ditko's high weirdness even further, fuelled by acid-soaked brainstorming sessions. A classic run of '70s stories by Steve Englehart and Frank Brunner witnessed the creation of the universe and Strange's encounter with a time-travelling sorcerer named Sise-Neg – read it backwards – intended to be God himself. When Stan Lee demanded they print a retraction, Englehart and Brunner faked an effusive fan letter from a Texan minister – and Marvel promptly ran it in the letters column...



Doctor Strange's classic adversaries include Nightmare, ruler of the Nightmare World within the Dream Dimension, the deeply demonic Mephisto and the flaming-headed Dread Dormammu, tyrant of the Dark Dimension. He's also tussled with Dracula. No word on which – if any – four-colour foe we'll see in the movie

but Mads Mikkelsen's character remains intriguingly unnamed...



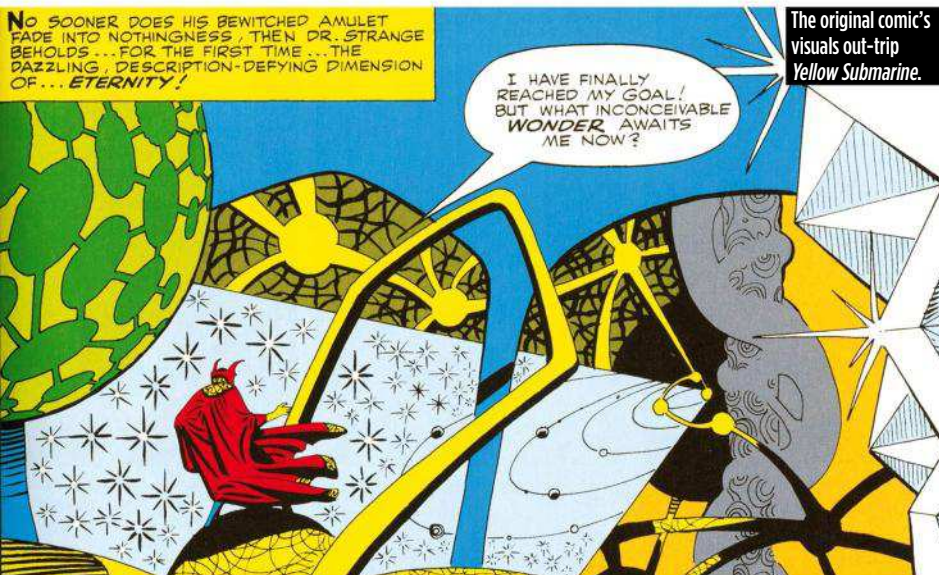
Benedict Cumberbatch beat out Jared Leto, Ethan Hawke and Joaquin Phoenix to bring Strange to the big screen but he's not the first live action incarnation: Peter Hooten played the Master of the Mystic Arts in a 1978 TV pilot. Tom Selleck was reportedly up for the role in the early '80s – it's the 'tache, right? – while in 1989 Nicolas Cage was director Alex Cox's pick. Now that would have melted reality...



This is a crucial movie for Marvel. Just as *Guardians Of The Galaxy* carved out the cosmic frontier of the studio's universe and *Daredevil*, on television, established its street-level battlefield, *Doctor Strange* will hurl audiences even further away from their shiny, superheroic comfort zone. "It's going to open up a whole other side of storytelling for our movies," promises Kevin Feige. If Marvel nail this, it's where the magic truly begins... ●

Doctor Strange opens on 28 October.

NO SOONER DOES HIS BEWITCHED AMULET FADE INTO NOTHINGNESS, THEN DR. STRANGE BEHOLDS... FOR THE FIRST TIME... THE PAZZLING, DESCRIPTION-DEFYING DIMENSION OF... ETERNITY!



The original comic's visuals out-trip *Yellow Submarine*.



Go on the internet and check out all of Cumberbatch's film posters featuring his back.

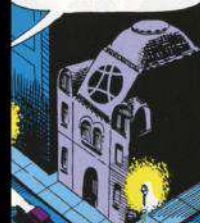
SURREAL ESTATE

Inside Strange's mystic mansion



One of the most famous addresses in the Marvel Universe, Strange's lair is located at 177A Bleecker Street in the heart of New York's bohemian Greenwich Village. This three-storey Victorian townhouse would be a tough sell for any Manhattan estate agent – the land it stands on was once cursed by a shaman to cage a chaos-entity and it's also been a pagan sacrificial site, a paupers' graveyard and home to a Satanic cult. Still, nice kitchen. A nexus for occult energies, it's now protected by the Seal of the Vishanti aka the Window of the Worlds, whose iconic, faithfully reproduced design can be glimpsed in the film's trailer. The building's labyrinthine interior is bigger on the inside, TARDIS style, its rooms forever shifting and rearranging, their doors granting access to other dimensions. The third floor holds Strange's sacred Sanctum Sanctorum, housing his world-beating collection of magical books and artefacts.

... SLOWLY, SILENTLY THE MIST PENETRATES EVERY BRICK, EVERY PIECE OF STONE AND WOOD AND MORTAR, UNTIL IT BECOMES PART OF THE HOUSE ITSELF.



GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL 2

5 MAY 2017

Crank up the Awesome Mix! The interplanetary A-holes return with writer/director/vibemaster James Gunn in tow. We're promised a more emotional, character-focused tale, delving into Star-Lord's daddy issues (hello, Kurt Russell!). It's Marvel Cosmic but Gunn says the crew of the Milano won't be tangling with Thanos, the Big Bad of Phase 3.

M A R V E L * P R E V I E W

THE POWER OF THREE

Beyond Doctor Strange...
Marvel's masterplan for Phase 3
locks down the future

THE AVENGERS 4 (TITLE TBC)

3 MAY 2019

This is it: the blockbusting climax of Phase 3 and the culmination of the entire Marvel masterplan as the united might of the MCU rallies to take down Thanos the mad Titan. Will they all combine into a single, giant-sized superhero, Power Rangers style? Or will every Stan Lee cameo character suddenly touch hands and rip reality apart? Frankly, all bets are off...

THE AVENGERS 3 (TITLE TBC)

4 MAY 2018

The threat level escalates as the massed ranks of the MCU prepare to battle Thanos, whose scheme to ensnare the Infinity Stones heads towards its universe-quaking endgame. The Russo Bros are filming back-to-back in an epic nine-month shoot but claim the movies are "very, very different from one another... It's not a part one and part two scenario, necessarily."





SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

7 JULY 2017

We've seen him steal the screen in *Civil War* - now Tom Holland's teen web-slinger headlines his own movie. It's set to be the most low-key of the Phase 3 films, returning Peter Parker to his high school roots for a coming-of-age tale inspired by such '80s touchstones as *The Breakfast Club*. Robert Downey Jr provides connective tissue to the wider MCU.



THOR: RAGNAROK

3 NOVEMBER 2017

Thor and the Hulk were MIA from *Captain America: Civil War*, and here's why... The thunder god teams with Mark Ruffalo's rage-beast as Asgard faces the end of days. Helmer Taika Waititi wants to bring a lighter, wittier touch to the big-screen Norse saga but the ending will, we're told, leave Thor with some profound emotional motivation for the rest of Phase 3...



BLACK PANTHER

16 FEBRUARY 2018

The aftershocks of *Civil War* continue to ripple through the MCU... Now the solo spotlight falls on Chadwick Boseman's T'Challa, wrestling with the duties of kingship in the secretive African nation of Wakanda. Expect "a big geo-political action adventure", brought to the screen with the kind of punch director Ryan Coogler gave *Rocky* resurrection *Creed*.



ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

6 JULY 2018

Rushed onto the studio slate after the world fell hard for Paul Rudd's micro-sized hero, the sequel promotes Evangeline Lilly to official partner-in-crimebusting, a co-headlining dynamic that's a first for Marvel. It'll be a breather in between the cosmic action as Phase 3 builds to a close but don't rule out a deeper dive into the microverse, in search of the original Wasp...



CAPTAIN MARVEL

8 MARCH 2019

Remarkably it's Marvel's first film to topline a female superhero - ahead of a solo Black Widow movie, which now looks like it's happening - and one that's still very much an unknown quantity, with no star or director attached. In the comics Carol Danvers is linked to the cosmic machinations of the Kree - already introduced to the MCU in *Guardians Of The Galaxy* - but this one's rumoured to be an earthbound origin tale.



MARVEL PREVIEW

DEFENDERS ASSEMBLE!

What next for Marvel's Netflix heroes?

Two bruisingly brilliant seasons of *Daredevil* and an equally acclaimed debut for *Jessica Jones* have established Netflix as the street-level frontier of Marvel's screen universe. But that's only the tip of the streaming giant's superheroic ambitions...

Next out of the gates is *Luke Cage*, arriving for your binge-watching pleasure in late September. A solo showcase for Mike Colter, who co-starred as the bulletproof barman in *Jessica Jones*, it shifts the New York action from Hell's Kitchen to Harlem, pitching Cage against the uptown underworld. Showrunner Cheo Hodari Hoker promises "*The Wire* of Marvel television," informed by a '90s hip-hop vibe and some socially conscious scripting.

That's followed in early 2017 by *Iron Fist*, starring *Game Of Thrones*'s Finn Jones as Danny Rand, the heir to a business empire who returns to reclaim his birthright after a decade of martial arts training in the fabled Tibetan city of K'un-Lun. David Wenham is antagonist Harold Meachum, the ruthless businessman now running Rand Enterprises. The show's ensemble includes *90210*'s Jessica Stroup and *Banshee*'s Tom Pelphrey as Meachum's kids while Jessica Henwick plays urban samurai Colleen Wing, one half of the deadly Daughters of the Dragon with Misty Knight (who we'll see in *Luke Cage*, played by Simone Missick).

If the show honours the comics then there'll be a strong mystical element mixed in with the trademark Netflix grit. Iron Fist has the power to summon the occult energy known as chi, manifesting it as a flaming aura around his fightin' hand. And star Finn Jones has certainly

gone deep with the prep: his daily routine included two and a half hours of kung fu, wushu and tai-chi, followed by weight training, meditation classes and Buddhist study. Dedication, brother. The show's filming now in New York.

It's all building to *The Defenders*, uniting the Netflix heroes against the greatest threat to the city yet, beyond Kingpin, beyond Killgrave, beyond the Hand... Star Charlie Cox says it's Matt Murdock who assembles these inner city Avengers, aware he cannot go it alone after the events of *Daredevil* season two. That season's showrunners – Douglas Petrie and Marco Ramirez – are overseeing this show too, with Drew Goddard onboard as executive producer. Expect it mid-late 2017.

Post-*Defenders* we're promised a second season of *Jessica Jones*, showrun by *True Blood*'s Raelle Tucker. And with a Punisher TV series showrun by *Hannibal*'s Steve Lightfoot – and whispers of a Moon Knight show in the wings – Marvel's Netflix empire will soon rival the big screen for total superhero meltdown... ●

Nick Setchfield

Daredevil will return – but in a different show.

Expect a two-year wait for new *Jessica Jones*.

Mike Colter is your hero for hire.

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FANTASTIC MR DAHL

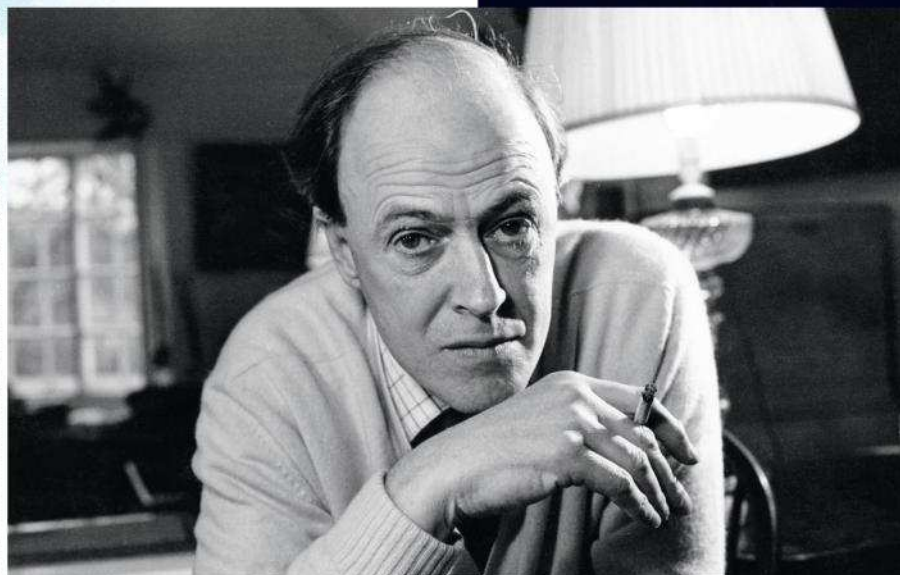
As Steven Spielberg brings **THE BFG** to the big screen, Luke Dormehl looks at how a Master of the Macabre became one of our greatest children's writers

Exceedingly tall, with long spindly fingers and a penchant for spending his time in a writing shed in his garden showcasing, among other items, a glass vial containing glutinous

pieces of his spine and a large metal ball comprised of the wrappers of hundreds of chocolate bars, Roald Dahl could easily have been a character in one of his own books. One of his publishers once dubbed him the “Master of the Macabre”. While not a straightforward horror writer by any means, this description does justice to an author who didn’t just craft a string of successful children’s blockbuster novels about evil witches, child-munching giants and telekinetic young girls, but also lent his zany wit to dozens of adult short stories and a handful of great movie and TV scripts – from adapting his friend Ian Fleming’s *You Only Live Twice* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* to playing a bit-part in the creation of *Gremlins*.

Dahl was born in 1916, in Cardiff, Wales to Norwegian parents. His father, a businessman named Harald Dahl, died of pneumonia when Roald was just three. Although death is generally treated unsentimentally in Dahl’s writing, it is fascinating to note how many of the characters in his books come from broken homes in which one or both parents are dead. Sophie in *The BFG*, the unnamed narrator in *The Witches* and James in *James And The Giant Peach* all share the trait of starting the book without their biological parents. The note of parental abandonment in his work is even stronger when you consider that Roald’s father died just three weeks after Dahl’s older sister: his father’s noted favourite. Characters such as Matilda Wormwood in *Matilda* are cruelly passed over in the affection of her parents in favour of her brother.

Despite these seemingly autobiographical features in his work, however, Dahl was reportedly as surprised as anyone to hear of their existence. “He absolutely detested analysing his own work,” says Donald Sturrock, former friend of Dahl’s and the author of the biography *Storyteller: The Life Of Roald Dahl*. “I once asked Roald about the fact that many of his characters come from broken homes. He said, ‘Oh no, I don’t do that. Other writers do, but I don’t.’ When I pointed out to him the



Roald Dahl, one of Britain’s greatest genre writers.

overwhelming evidence that he did, in fact, do that he was completely shocked. He said, ‘You’ve rather caught me out there.’”

LEARNING HIS CRAFT

Dahl had an unhappy time at boarding school, which is described in his quasi-fictionalised memoir *Boy*. During World War II he served in the RAF as a fighter pilot and, later, as a diplomat at the British Embassy in Washington, DC. Dahl’s wartime experience formed the basis of his first published story: a 1942 piece for an American publication called the *Saturday Evening Post* concerning a near-fatal plane crash he had been in. He liked to claim he was paid \$1,000 for writing the piece, which took him all of five hours to do. In fact, he was paid \$300 for it, which added up to \$187.50 after tax and agent deductions. Regardless, he had found his calling. In the future there would be far less need to exaggerate his earnings.

Dahl’s magazine story for the *Evening Post* was followed by his first children’s book, *The Gremlins*, which was based on folkloric figures who, legend had it, were responsible for the mechanical faults on board planes. While not a direct lineage, Dahl’s book popularised the idea of “gremlins”, which four decades later led to Joe Dante’s 1984 hit movie, *Gremlins*.

From there, Dahl became known as a writer of twisted short stories for adults, often with fiendish and bawdy elements – and regular twist endings. At one point, his stories were turned down by the fiction editor of the *New Yorker* on the grounds that they were, “a little too unpleasant for our general readers”. A typical example of one of his short stories from this time is *Taste*, concerning a wager regarding whether or not a wine connoisseur can guess →

“The *New Yorker* said his stories were, ‘a little too unpleasant’”

GETTY (1)

THE TALL GUY

Will Dahl and Spielberg be a match made in heaven?

Until this summer, the only BFG to make it to the big screen was the Rock's Big F**king Gun in the *Doom* movie. In the meantime, Roald Dahl's famous Big Friendly Giant has somehow remained confined to the classic novel, an ingeniously staged theatre adaptation, and a 1989 cartoon adaptation from *DangerMouse* creators Cosgrove Hall. That's about to change courtesy of Steven Spielberg, who (perhaps surprisingly) is venturing into the world of Roald Dahl for the first time – armed with a script from his *ET* screenwriter, the late Melissa Mathison.

It's been a long old road bringing the book to the screen, with frequent Spielberg collaborators Frank Marshall and Lucasfilm head honcho Kathleen Kennedy having first started developing a movie in the early '90s – at one stage Robin Williams was attached to star as the BFG. But the limitations of filmmaking technology at the time – how do you convincingly place Sophie, a normal 10-year-old girl, next to a 24-foot giant? – meant an extended stay in development hell for the giant. Enter the magic of performance capture, which is being used to turn Spielberg's *Bridge Of Spies* star (and awards-magnet) Mark Rylance into the giant.

"One of the most important things for Steven was to have the actors in the same space so they were relating to each other, so Mark, as the giant, was really talking to Sophie," Marshall tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "Even five, 10 years ago the two actors would have



Give Sophie a big hand...

had to be in different stages to do this. That wouldn't work very well."

Alongside Rylance, newcomer Ruby Barnhill (best known in Blighty for CBBC show *4 O'Clock Club* but making her movie debut) plays orphan/giant abductee Sophie; *Flight Of The Conchords*' Jemaine Clement plays the wonderfully named Fleshlumpeater, leader of the child-eating faction of giants; and Penelope Wilton is welcomed into royalty as a queen who – creating a constitutional nightmare by displaying rather more power than a British monarch usually would – helps the BFG and Sophie unleash the full might of the UK military to take the nasty giants down. (No UN resolutions here...)

Rylance's big-eared BFG looks remarkably faithful to the Quentin Blake-inspired pictures in our head, and it seems the story will stick similarly closely to Dahl's novel – even down to "Gobblefunk", the BFG's unique take on English, with all its trogglehumpers, snozzcumbers, whizzpoppers and frobscottle.

"We've kept very loyal to Dahl. It's a very loyal interpretation of the book," Spielberg says. "The challenge is going to be in different foreign countries, doing the dub, finding the equivalent word in the lexicon of Italian or French or German or Spanish, you know what I'm saying?"

Richard Edwards



Ruby Barnhill's Sophie is going to have this expression a fair bit.

the vintage of a particular bottle of wine – with marriage to the host's daughter hanging in the balance. Another, *William And Mary*, is a love story of sorts: involving a dead husband, a widowed woman, a brain and a jar. The content may be more adult than his more famous children's books, but the comically grotesque imagination leaves no doubt that this is the same man behind the pen.

"Dahl created a world which is instantly recognisable," says Simon Callow, an actor and biographer who has appeared in several Roald Dahl adaptations. "His characters are indelibly memorable and his landscape is as identifiable as that of Dickens or of Dostoevsky. Like them, his vision is grotesque and disturbing – but heightened in such a way that it is nightmarishly on the brink of tears or terror."

TO THE BIG SCREEN

With such brilliant world-building abilities, it was inevitable that Hollywood would come knocking before long. Almost all of Dahl's most popular books have now been brought to the big screen – *The BFG* hits screens this July – making it somewhat surprising to note that his first big-budget screenplays were adapting the works of others. The most notable of these is fellow British writer Ian Fleming, whose books *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and the James Bond novel *You Only Live Twice* Dahl received screenplay credits for helping bring to screen.

"There were very few men that Dahl admired and Ian Fleming was one of them," says Donald Sturrock. "He saw Fleming as this very cool, stylish, suave character. They met in Jamaica through a mutual friend, and both had a shared history with the Secret Intelligence Service as well." That wasn't the only connection: the authors of the authoritative James Bond history *Some Kind Of Hero* note that, like Fleming and his fictitious spy, Dahl was also "often described as a hard-drinking, womanising gambler". With all of these traits combined, he was therefore perfectly placed to write a great James Bond movie. However that didn't stop him from taking the novel *You Only Live Twice* – which he described as "tired, bad, Ian's worst book" – and turning it into, "the biggest load of bullshit I've ever put my name to". Despite these remarks, the movie remains one of the zaniest and most fun in the franchise's history – and all the better for it.

Dahl also hosted and wrote for an American sci-fi and horror anthology series called *Way Out*. It was at this time in his career that he began to cultivate an image for himself which would become his public persona. "It was a slightly sinister, dark character and he employed it to deliver these one-minute intros for each episode," says Donald Sturrock. "I think he was amazed that producers wanted him to [host the show] – and were prepared to



WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (1971)

This freaky '70s musical tinkers with the title and the plot (no squirrels, more Slugworth) to make a movie with an even darker aftertaste than Dahl's original *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* novel – Dahl wasn't a fan, despite the fact he co-wrote the screenplay. Gene Wilder turns the "odd" setting to maximum as the top-hatted confectioner, yet still looks comparatively normal next to Johnny Depp in Tim Burton's more-faithful (and underrated) 2005 version.

LIVING DAHL

Top screen adaptations of Roald's fantasy works



MATILDA (1996)

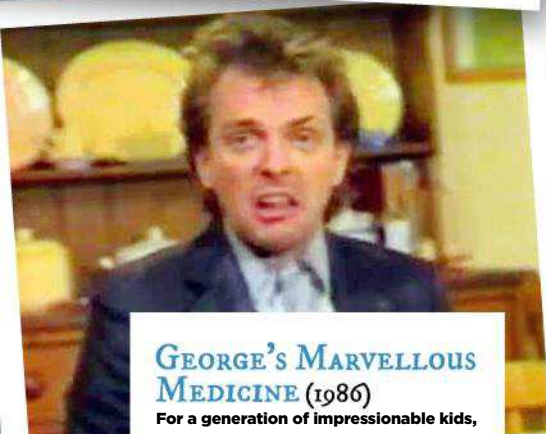
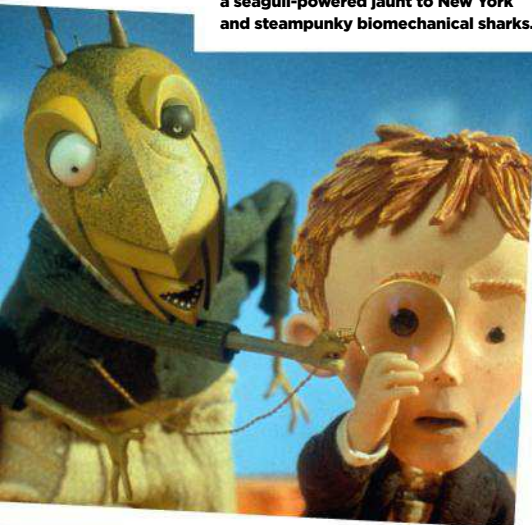
For a grown-up, Roald Dahl always had an uncanny understanding of what makes child minds tick – and the excitement of reading about a young hero getting one up on naughty adults. Director/star Danny DeVito gets the tone of this adaptation completely right, as six-year-old Matilda Wormwood gets revenge on her beastly parents and monstrous headmistress Miss Trunchbull with the help of her nascent telekinetic abilities. It's like *Carrie* for pre-teens.

THE WITCHES (1990)

It's arguably Dahl's darkest kids' book and it's given a suitably bleak adaptation at the unlikely hand of *Don't Look Now* and *The Man Who Fell To Earth* director Nicolas Roeg. The Jim Henson Company have a field day with the effects, turning boys into very convincing talking mice, and Anjelica Huston into a suitably gruesome Grand High Witch. It's just a shame the Hollywoodised ending bottles it.

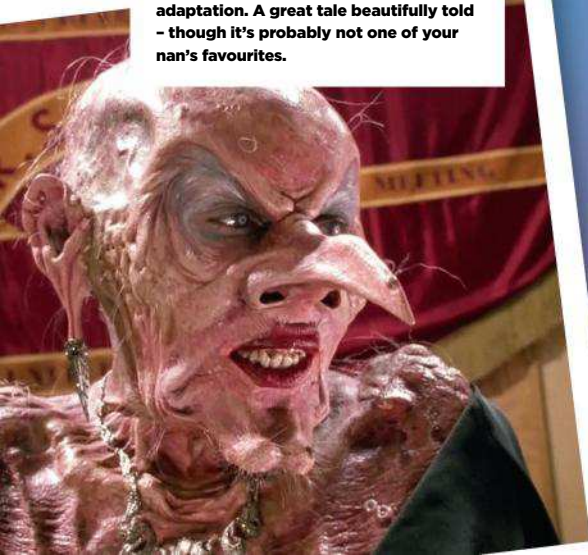
JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH (1996)

The *Nightmare Before Christmas* team of director Henry Selick and producer Tim Burton unite for this bold mix of live-action and stop-motion animation. The human-sized segments are fun enough, but it's when James meets oversized bugs inside the eponymous piece of fruit that things take a wonderful turn for the avant garde, with a seagull-powered jaunt to New York and steampunky biomechanical sharks.



GEORGE'S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE (1986)

For a generation of impressionable kids, BBC storytelling show *Jackanory* marked a first encounter with one Rik Mayall. Dahl's tale of granny-poisoning proves the perfect match of story and storyteller. While it's just a loud man reciting a story while running around a house, making a mess, it's a memorable adaptation. A great tale beautifully told – though it's probably not one of your nan's favourites.



So can *The BFG* do giant box office?

pay him a good amount of money to do it, too." Later he built on this persona for British television series *Tales Of The Unexpected*, which ran between 1979 and 1988. *Tales Of The Unexpected* was as unusual as one might have expected: a quintessentially British version of the popular *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. In one memorable episode, entitled "Royal Jelly", a beekeeper feeds his baby daughter royal jelly to help her gain strength: with both the father and child eventually revealing themselves to be part-bee. Another episode was later remade as Quentin Tarantino's segment in the 1994 anthology film, *Four Rooms*.

DARK TINGES

It is, of course, Dahl's children's stories which remain his best-loved creations. 1961's *James And The Giant Peach* set the tone for his children's novels – even if it was criticised by Ursula K Le Guin for turning her daughter "quite nasty" upon reading it. Dahl's string of classics followed in the decades after: *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The Witches*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *The BFG* and more. Dahl eliminated the naughtiest elements of his adult work, but his children's stories remain every bit as dark and eccentric as anything else that he wrote. "Kids especially adore the outright judgements on the characters [in his books]," says Simon Callow. "The bad are magnificently repellent, the innocent swept up in their loathsome behaviour. We sense a deep justice in this assessment. Dahl tells it like it is."

This ability to "tell it like it is" perhaps explains why Dahl's books register so much with a younger audience. His stories frequently feature strong authority characters dishing out cruelty and violence on the weak; only for the tables to eventually be turned on them. After

all, nobody is smaller and weaker than children – which means that it works even better when they are forced to think their way around physical frailty with ever-more inventive solutions to problems. In his children's books, Dahl is a defender and co-conspirator of his childish readers. The adult world he portrays is populated by nightmarish adult figures like *Matilda*'s Miss Trunchbull or *The Witches*' cabal of child-murdering-but-otherwise-respectable witches. Dahl's own avatar in these stories is the quirky grown-ups who never lost sight of the fantastical: the Norwegian grandmother in *The Witches*, Willy Wonka and Grandpa Joe in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, or the titular giant in *The BFG*. Thanks to them, the child protagonists can not only take on the establishment; they can win, too.

Roald Dahl passed away in November 1990 at the age of 74. Today his books have sold upwards of 200 million copies worldwide. But more even than ever-growing sales, there is also a newfound reverence for his work which may have eluded him in life. "He was immensely proud of the fact that he was a successful professional writer, but I think he was under-recognised and underappreciated in his lifetime," says Donald Sturrock. "Even when he died there was a tremendous amount of literary snobbery surrounding his work. People didn't want to acknowledge this guy who lived somewhat as an outsider, raising his fingers to the literary establishment."

The fact that the world was forced, by his sheer talent, to accept such an uncompromising unlikely hero as one of its greatest authors is arguably as Dahl-esque a story as he ever wrote. We're still waiting on the twist ending... ●

The BFG opens on 22 July.

ALEXANDRA SHIPP

The young Storm bringing a wind of change to *X-Men: Apocalypse*

Words by Ian Berriman // Photography by Luke Duval

Channel the buzz that Alexandra Shipp obviously feels about joining the X-Men cast into electricity and you wouldn't need any visual effects boffins to add the lightning bolts – she'd be firing them out of her fingertips. Stepping into the shoes of Halle Berry's weather goddess, in *X-Men:*

Apocalypse she portrays a young Storm very different from the mature mutant previously seen in the movies: a homeless kid, living by her wits on the streets of 1983 Cairo. She looks different from her predecessor too – like her '80s comics counterpart, rocking a fan-pleasing silver mohawk that required Shipp to get out the clippers (when we talk, she's managed to grow back "a little bit of peach fuzz"). It's a significant step up for Shipp, who confesses to having had a total "nerd brain freeze" her first day on set. "It was just surreal. I was so blown away by the whole situation." Hang on, Alexandra – shouldn't it be you doing the blowing away?

After you got the role of Storm, did you do much research into the character?

☛ For me, it was imperative that I learned her past. I wanted to read all the comics. I grew up watching the cartoon, but I rewatched it – I was like, "I've got to get my facts right!" So I studied really hard, because I wanted to give the fans the young Storm that they've been waiting for. Shoot, I grew up watching these movies, and I'm like, "Hell yeah, we're doing young Storm? We get to see where she came from?" She's an iconic character. And for me, growing up as an African-American, the fact that a superhero looked like me was just everything. There are so few roles for women of colour in films, and when I was growing up, that meant so much. I loved Wonder Woman. I loved Catwoman – I liked how crazy and fly she was. But they didn't necessarily look like me. Watching *X-Men...* it confirmed that I could be super, that I could have powers. Because there's someone out there doing it and they look like me.

Did the fact that you were following in Halle Berry's footsteps make it particularly daunting?

☛ Oh yeah, of course. There were three months where I was

like, "I don't know if I can do it." Then I had to take a step back and be like, "Hold on, this is just a different representation of her. It can't be as daunting as I'm making it out to be."

The Storm mohawk: it's a wig, right?

☛ Yeah, they would shave my head down to the skin, then they'd glue a mohawk on.

So what was it like the day you had all your hair cut off?

☛ I threw a head-shaving party! It was really fun. Two days before I was going to leave, I texted all of my friends and was like, "Be at my house, Saturday night, stroke of midnight." I bought a whole bunch of vodka. I set up a camera in my living room. My friends all showed up and I was like, "Guys, everyone here knows that I've got *X-Men*, and we're all really excited. Now I need you to shave my fucking head!" I had 30 people in my apartment, and everyone came up and shaved a little piece of my head. Then afterwards, my little brother shaved it all down so I didn't look like a plucked chicken. It was the best way to do it, to be drunk with my friends and everyone just shaving a piece! And the mohawk was so awesome. If I could have a silver mohawk, I would still have the frickin' mohawk on my head right now.

On set, did you have any moments that made you think, "I can't believe I get to do this for a living"?

☛ When I was flying! It was so much fun. I was 50 feet in the air, on the wires, bombs are supposed to be going off and I'm zig-zagging around. I was like, "This is the best job I could ask for". Y'know, my entire life, I've had dreams about flying. So it was really fun to actually fly in real life. I was like, "Oh, this is awesome. This is cool. I get it now!"

Assuming you get to come back as young Storm in future films, is there anything you'd like to see them do with the character?

☛ There's a few comics I read where Mystique and Storm were friends. I would love to have that aspect, before Mystique goes off and becomes, quote unquote, "evil". I think it would be really beautiful to touch on. Right now, Mystique is kind of the matriarch of the X-Men. When she goes off, Storm replaces her. But I want people to see a different aspect of that. If they do something like that, I have a few ideas! ●

X-Men: Apocalypse is in cinemas now.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Actress

Born

→ 16 July 1991

From

→ Phoenix, Arizona

Greatest Hits

→ *House Of Anubis*,
Aaliyah: The Princess of R&B,
Straight Outta Compton

Random Fact

→ Shipp is a huge fan of Elvis Presley, and owns nearly 200 of his records.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
ALEXANDRA SHIPP

“I THREW A
HEAD-SHAVING
PARTY! IT WAS
REALLY FUN”



2011 winner Lauren Beukes picks up her prize for *Zoo City*.

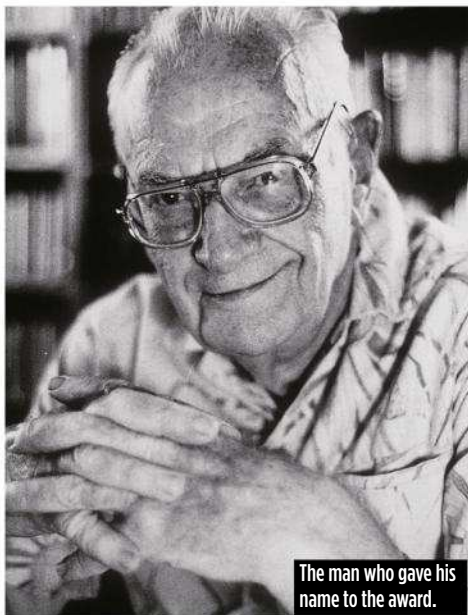
Years Of The Clarke Award

Named for
the creator of *2001*,
it's more than just another
SF literary award.
Jonathan Wright explores
why the Clarke
matters...

To quote critic Paul Kincaid, one of the judges of the inaugural Arthur C Clarke Award, "We didn't know what we were doing." Writing a decade ago in *Vector*, when the Clarke had just turned 20, Kincaid was looking back at the moment when leading lights in the literary science fiction community decided that awarding a jury prize to honour the year's best SF novel could be a way to help "promote British science fiction".

It may, if we're to believe Kincaid, have started as a bit of a punt, albeit one made with the involvement of the British Science Fiction Association (BSFA), the Science Fiction Foundation and, putting up prize money, Uncle Arthur himself, but the Clarke has subsequently become – and let's keep the British end up here – the world's most important science fiction literature prize. As the Clarke approaches its 30th anniversary, it seems an appropriate moment to ask both how did that happen and why does it matter?

To begin to answer these questions, it's necessary to go back to 1987 and an Eastercon that, according to Dave Langford's write-up in *Ansible*, divided opinions between those who →



The man who gave his name to the award.

thought it “unutterably boring, dull and bad” and those who found it “wondrous and brilliant beyond compare”. It was here Kincaid announced the first winner of the Clarke: Margaret Atwood for *The Handmaid's Tale*, a novel by a mainstream novelist.

“The importance of Atwood winning was that it marked it as a *literary* award,” says Dr Mark Boulton, reader in film and literature at the University of the West of England (UWE). In contrast to the Hugos, which Boulton jokes are “a semi-regulated popularity poll”, here was a prize that had both critical rigour and a refreshingly broad take on what constituted science fiction.

As the current Clarke director Tom Hunter points out, that doesn't mean there haven't subsequently been “winners with spaceships” but Atwood's triumph was still an important marker. The Clarke immediately captured a zeitgeist it was helping to create in the middle of the 1980s, a time when literary SF was renewing and redefining itself.

In 1982, the same year *Blade Runner* was released, *Interzone* was launched, an important precursor to the British space opera boom. In 1984, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* injected cyberpunk's dark energy into the genre. In 1987, Iain M Banks outlined himself as an SF novelist with *Consider Phlebas*. In 1989, Bruce Sterling coined the phrase slipstream fiction to describe “a kind of writing which simply makes you feel very strange; the way that living in the 20th century makes you feel”. All of this, says Mark Boulton, led to “the creation of an audience who wouldn't

necessarily think of themselves as science fiction readers”.

Sam Jordison, *Guardian* journalist and director of award-winning literary publisher Beggar Galley Press, is an example of the kind of reader Boulton means. When *SFX* asks him whether the Clarke's history mirrors a greater acceptance of genre fiction in the mainstream, he replies: “It's probably telling that by this stage I find it quite hard to think about this question clearly. Most of my experience at *The Guardian* now is that SF is thought just as valid and interesting and important as other genres, and it's hard to remember that it wasn't always thus.” The Clarke, he adds, “formed a good part of my journey to enlightenment and opened up some great doors into worlds I didn't know about”.

MISSION STATEMENT

None of this, incidentally, should be read as intended to suggest that SF should somehow have a mission to go mainstream, but it's important because its original mission, to promote British SF, has never changed. In this context, the way its judges' choices have provoked, in different years, delight, incredulity and even anger is one of the Clarke's greatest assets. It probably helps too that only a brave gambler would bet on which shortlisted book might win the prize.

“It has become a real focal point for talking about the whole of the genre,” says Tom Hunter. “It's always hugely anticipated, it gets a lot of chatter, a lot of conversation about why it's right or wrong, of course. But what really seems to have happened is there's a lot of positivity about the award, even in years when people are not enthused by the choices, we've managed to create a thing where people are interested in *why* the choices were made by our judges.”

Consider Neal Stephenson's 2004 Clarke winner *Quicksilver*, essentially a historical novel, albeit one written with an SF sensibility. “There were really, really long decisions about whether *Quicksilver* could be considered science fiction,” says Mark Boulton, a judge that year, “and my argument was that absolutely it is because it's about beginning to perceive the universe in terms of information.”

If the award to Stephenson was largely greeted warmly, there have been moments too when the Clarke has come in for sharp

Close But No Clarke Award

Five shortlisted contenders that didn't bag the big one

Iain M Banks
Use Of Weapons (1991)

Lisa Tuttle
Lost Futures (1993)

M John Harrison
Light (2003)

David Mitchell
Cloud Atlas (2005)

Liz Williams
Banner Of Souls (2006)

China Miéville

Winner for *Perdido Street Station* (2001), *Iron Council* (2005) and *The City & The City* (2010)

“[Winning the Clarke meant a lot] both in terms of notice from the outside, but also, at least as important for me, and I presume for most writers, in internal terms – the validation that this is worth doing, that there's a there there. I like the visionary/ecstatic elements of Clarke's writing, and feel a warmth about that association, but I think that's post-facto rationalising, which is no bad thing.”

Chris Beckett

Winner for *Dark Eden* (2013)

“My career got huge lift from the Clarke. There are so many books out there, so many more books than any one person can hope to read, that you really do need to stand out in some way if you are going to progress. Other than having your books made into TV and films, prizes must be the main way that that happens. It got my book a huge amount of attention.”

Ann Leckie

Winner For *Ancillary Justice* (2014)

“I'd assumed that the Clarke was far too ‘literary’ an award to go to my space opera adventure, so I took the shortlisting for a kind of win all its own and dismissed the possibility of actually getting the prize. I was absolutely astonished to win.”

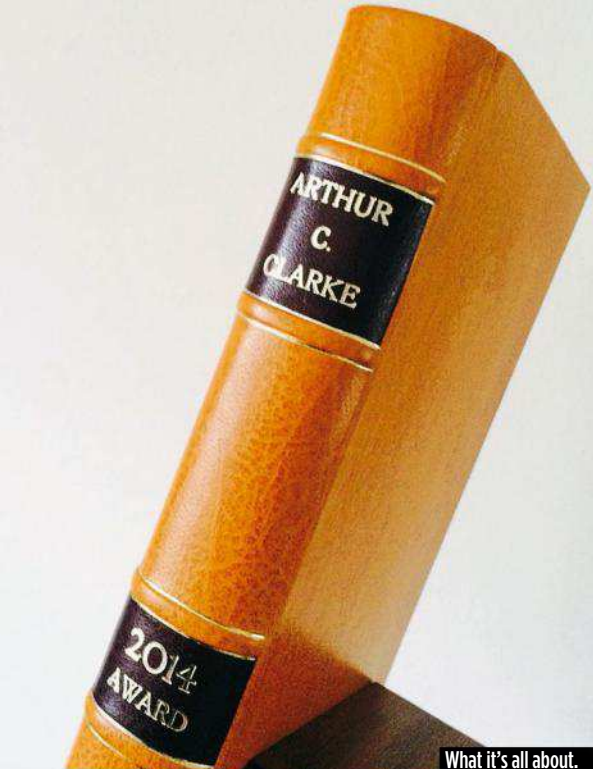
Paul McAuley

Winner for *Fairyland* (1996)

“Winning was a huge thrill, and felt like a vindication of a decision I'd made while writing *Fairyland* to quit my job and become a full-time author. I grew up reading the Holy Trinity – Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein – and of those three Clarke is the only author I can now comfortably reread. And my favourite film is *2001: A Space Odyssey*. So although Clarke always, rightly, maintained a hands-off approach to the award, it felt like a blessing from an author I hugely admired.”

Tom Hunter and his very first Clarke winner

“The first time I ever heard of the Clarke Award was standing in a WH Smith picking up a paperback of [Jeff Noon's] *Vurt* which announced it as the winner on the back jacket. I remember being hugely impressed by the sound of the award and imagined it as a giant red (or maybe silver) carpet affair lit by neon in what was to me then a very distant and imaginary version of London. Years later here I am, and I still have that battered paperback copy, signed by Jeff now of course. If my involvement with the award began anywhere, I think it was right there.”



What it's all about.



Lauren Beukes and China Miéville smile like the winners they are.



Sarah Pinborough and Kim Newman enjoy the hospitality.



Double winner Geoff Ryman and Clarke director Tom Hunter.

“We did have the debate: should we shut down after our quarter-century? We were broke”

criticism. In 2012, former Clarke winner Christopher Priest, in a blog entry widely reported outside genre circles, described that year's shortlist as “dreadful”, explained in unflattering detail precisely why he thought this, and called on the Clarke's “incompetent” judges to resign. “It meant the award meant something to people, and people who had platforms could announce it meant something to them,” says Mark Boulton.

The fuss was all the more remarkable because, just a year before, there was serious debate about whether the prize should continue. With Clarke's death in 2008, the award had lost not just its figurehead, but its financial patron. Money was tight. “We did have the debate: should we shut down after our quarter-century?” recalls Hunter. Not only was the prize “completely broke, technically”, but there was a fear it would “go backwards”.

TO THE RESCUE

In these difficult circumstances, it was an opportune moment for such a charismatic writer as Lauren Beukes to win. In 2011, *SFX* interviewed Beukes within minutes of her receiving the award. Having been convinced she didn't stand a chance of taking the prize, she looked shellshocked.

“I'd been struggling, fiercely,” she recalls. “*Zoo City* was about to go out of print in South Africa and I was super-broke. I'd recently lost my job when the animation company where I was head writer shut down and my friends had to organise a fundraiser to pay for my plane ticket from Cape Town to attend the ceremony in London. We were paying our mortgage out of the mortgage.”

In short, the award really meant something to its winner – and the modest cash prize was welcome too. Better still, Beukes joyfully ran with her success and, in keeping with the Clarke's ethos, even helped to bring about a mini-boom in African SF. Once again, the Clarke had caught a zeitgeist it was helping to create.

The fact that this time the wider world was far more aware of this happening than back in 1987 tells you all you need to know about why the Clarke matters. ●

From The Judging Room

The Inside Word

There's sometimes a perception the Clarke judges favour certain kinds of books. This isn't borne out by the evidence, says director Tom Hunter, who claims that books from across the genre have won down the years. “The judges are not ‘the judges’, they change every year,” he says. “No judging panel is the same.”

So what's it like to be a judge? First up, says Liz Williams, judge in 2011 and 2013, judges have to confront “the unfamiliar sense of despair that overcomes one when receiving yet another box of books”. This is, she concedes, “one of the first worldiest of first-world problems”. Adds Jon Courtenay Grimwood (2010 and 2011): “All I remember is having to read some of the bloody books three times and resenting reading a handful of them even once.”

Once the judges have whittled down the shortlisted six, the arguments begin. Or don't. Was there caffeine-fuelled wrangling? “Good lord, we didn't drink coffee,” says Williams. “We met in a pub and had a series of rather nice lunches – for which we individually paid, incidentally, in case the reader thinks we were squandering Clarke Award funds like Tory party grandees. It was very civilised.”

Nevertheless, there have certainly been years when there has been *drama*. Our best advice for finding out about these years? Ply a friendly judge with booze at your nearest convention.

A bit of light reading? 2013's submissions pile.



"I HAD TO WATCH
THE FILM TO
REMEMBER
WHAT I DID BUT
IT ALL CAME
BACK QUICKLY"

THE GRATEFUL NOT-SO-DEAD

Brent Spiner's back to save the planet in *Independence Day: Resurgence*.
Nick Setchfield digs his cosmic groove, man



No, they don't attach electrodes to me," says Brent Spiner, miraculously resurrected as Dr Brackish Okun, acid-fried brain-box of Area 51. "And no one cries, 'It's aliiive!'" Best known as Data, the android innocent of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Spiner's making an unexpected encore in his other geek-friendly franchise as Earth prepares for sequelicious devastation in *Independence Day: Resurgence*. Sorry, alien scum: seems the long-haired loon's as unkillable as the hippy dream...

Everybody assumed Okun was dead at the end of the first film. Was that your take too? Did you feel like you were playing a death scene back then?

● I wasn't really sure. I'll tell you the truth – Adam Baldwin played the military guy who came to see how I was doing. He had the line "He's dead." Before the film was released they decided to cut that line because they might one day do a sequel and they would like to have me back. So I'm lying there with my eyes open. And there's no telling what one goes through when one's been inhabited by an alien, so who's to say if I'm dead or alive, right? So indeed I am alive, and probably no one is more pleased about that than I am.

How does it feel to go back to a character after 20 years? Do you have a muscle memory of how you played him?

● I had to watch the film to remember what I did but it all came back really quickly. I also feel really grateful to be doing a character that I did 20 years ago. I feel like I'm in a club with Harrison and Carrie and Mark and Schwarzenegger. Maybe we should all have dinner one night.



Or maybe you could do a sci-fi *Expendables*.

● Oh, that would be interesting. I love that idea! I'm writing that down. And you will not get credit for it [laughs]...

Did you like what you did 20 years ago, when you went back to watch it?

● Did I like what I did? I think that's an understatement. I loved what I did [laughs]! There are very few characters you have licence to take to a place where there is no top. Most of the time we like to come from a place of truth and understatement but this character really allowed me to go full out. Twenty years ago I had just come out of *Star Trek*, playing a very contained character. So it allowed me to break loose and that was really fun. I've been very contained for the last 20 years so once again I get to break loose.

It just builds up inside you, does it? In 20-year cycles?

● Exactly. And it explodes on the screen! **Has he changed in 20 years?**

● I have changed. The character has not. He was already stuck in time in the first film. This was a guy who had gone to Berkeley and dropped a lot of acid. Maybe too much. He's still this long-haired hippy from the '60s.

Was he inspired by anybody?

● It came out of myself, really, because I went to college in the '60s. I didn't do that many

drugs to that degree but if I had that's who I would be.

How hippy were you?

● Oh, I was a hippy. I had long hair. But everyone did.

This is a franchise that's been resurrected after 20 years. We've also seen the return of *Star Wars* and *Jurassic Park*. Do you think it's healthy for our culture to keep revisiting these things?

● I'm not sure whether it is or it isn't. I'm certainly not smart enough to determine that. I think there's value in it if people enjoy it and are entertained by it. Obviously now there's been a shift where television is where the serious work is being done, for the most part, and features are for the masses, for entertainment. And I think that's fine. I think the more successful films in this genre are the ones where the audience can identify with the characters because ultimately special effects are only so satisfying – you have to connect with the characters. Those are the franchises that keep going.

There's a new *Star Trek* show coming in 2017. What does it need to do to work in the 21st century?

● I just think it needs to be there [laughs]. And just be entertaining. All anyone wants from their entertainment is to be entertained by it. And I think there's a good chance it'll work. There's a really great bunch of people attached to that project, really talented people. I have no doubt that's going to be a really huge success. **Shatner said it was strange to see Chris Pine playing Kirk. Do you think you would feel proprietorial if they ever recast Data?**

● I don't think I'll get proprietorial about it. I'd like to see Tilda Swinton play Data. Don't you think that'd be cool? ●

Independence Day: Resurgence opens on 23 June.

THE WARPED TERROR

THE CONJURING'S paranormal investigators
are coming to Britain for the sequel

Words: Ian Berriman, Rosie Fletcher, Sarah Dobbs



The power of box office compels you! The power of box office compels you! Back in 2013, James Wan's '70s-throwback horror *The Conjuring* did phenomenal business, eventually racking up a \$318 million worldwide. So it's not

exactly a shock that it's spawned demonic offspring. What might surprise you is that *The Conjuring 2* sees paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren (Patrick Wilson and Vera Fermiga) crossing the pond to Britain, to investigate another incident from the real-life couple's casebook: the Enfield poltergeist case, recently dramatised as Sky Living miniseries *The Enfield Haunting*.

For producer Peter Safran, following up the first film's New Hampshire hauntings (based on the 1971 case of the Perron family) with one of the UK's most well-publicised paranormal incidents was a no-brainer.

"It was an easy one," Safran says. "We wanted something that was very different from the Perron family case, which was quintessentially American. The fact it was set in London gave us a different environment to play with, a different time period and a different political situation. Plus, it was such a well-known story, we thought it was a worthy successor."

Not familiar with the story of single mother Peggy Hodgson and her four children? Then allow Peter Safran to set the scene for the sequel, which takes place six years after the events of the first film:

"It's 1977, England. They live in Enfield – council housing. Strange goings-on start. Ed and Lorraine are called in by Father Gordon [the priest from the first film], and he plays them a tape..."

Said tape features the ranting of a foul-mouthed old man.

"Ed says, 'It certainly sounds very disturbing.' →

Not sitting down for a jolly dinner party.



I think he's probably senile.' And Father Gordon says, 'That's a 12-year-old girl!' So that's the set-up. They say, 'We want you to go to England to observe this case as instruments of the Church... go and see what's really going on down there.'"

TO THE STUDIO

And go the Warrens do – although for the most part, the production didn't. While principal photography did conclude with three days of exteriors shot a couple of streets from where the Hodgsons lived, the interior of their Enfield council house was recreated on the Warner lot in California – largely for practical reasons, as director James Wan explains.

"I don't think I could shoot in a location that's the right size as the real location! My film crew alone would take up the whole living room – I would have nowhere to put the actors! So just from a cinematic standpoint you have to cheat a bit."

That set received perhaps the ultimate test of its authenticity when the sisters at the centre of events, Margaret and Janet Hodgson, were invited over to pay a visit.

"It really was an extraordinary experience," Safran recalls. "We obviously designed it around the pictures they had and the stories they told us. To see it 38 years later was a wonderful thing for them."

The sisters' trip to LA also involved a very special reunion – with the real-life Lorraine Warren. Peter Safran's fellow producer Rob Cowan was present.

"When they met Lorraine, they got really emotional," Cowan remembers. "They all gave big hugs. They hadn't seen each other for almost 40 years. They were chatting away for hours on end together. And the sisters told us how much Lorraine had helped them

throughout that time period. Margaret in particular got very teary-eyed. Janet sent us a note afterwards saying it had brought back a lot of the memories of what had happened to her. I think she found it very cathartic."

According to Peter Safran, having Lorraine Warren herself – now 90 years old – available to consult with has been a big help to the filmmakers too, in terms of giving this franchise a sense of verisimilitude.

"When you talk to her," he says, "Whether it's about a specific case or just in general, it gives you that authenticity that other films don't have. She gives you the little details about what she and Ed would do, how they would think about things, how they would talk together and discuss options."

In general, the approach on this film has been to stay true to the, ahem, spirit of the story while (of necessity) compressing the timeline, and also inventing certain details to surprise.

"Because people know certain events, you feel beholden to show them," Cowan says. "There's a famous documentary that shows the police talk about seeing a chair move in the house, so you feel you have to show those things to reward people that know the real story. But there's other stories that have been told to us that aren't out in public."

"Also, what we're really trying to do is capture how the kids felt. So we've come up with things to show that. We take their stories, amalgamate them, and come up with fresh new things that tell their story without telling things that everybody already knows about."

It sounds like the approach has paid off.

"When she saw the movie, Margaret came to me and said, 'This is exactly how we felt when it was going on.'"

Although the British setting is one significant difference between *The Conjuring 2* and its forebear, a sequel needs more than a

Some kids have such messy bedrooms...



“It’s unlike any horror film you will ever see. It’s outrageously eclectic!”



Ed Warren (Patrick Wilson) gets cross.



"So tell us more about your furniture..."



change of location to avoid it feeling like a mere retread. Thankfully there are further points of contrast – starting with the characterisation of the heroes.

“Ed and Lorraine Warren are such fascinating characters,” Peter Safran says. “I think we all hoped while making the first one that we’d have the opportunity to build on that. And you’ll see in this movie we give them a lot more depth than they had even in the first one.”

Star Patrick Wilson (Ed Warren) tells us that the new film depicts a deepening love between the couple, and also addresses the fact that in the six years since the events of the first film, the Warrens (like their real-life counterparts) have attracted sceptical media attention – something James Wan was keen to address.

FURTHER THAN BEFORE

“I confront a guy who’s a non-believer and thinks I’m lying,” Wilson explains. “A lot of aspects of Ed are pushed to the limit. There are moments of levity that you saw in the first one that we’ve pushed a little further. James very much wants to push the envelope, so that’s what you see with Ed – those things that you glimpsed in the first one, we cranked all those things up. And I think you see an even stronger bond between Ed and Lorraine, and a stronger friction in terms of what’s right for the cause and for them as people.”

There’s also something of a switch from *The Conjuring*’s firmly female-centric focus.

“With the first film it was five girls in the family, the mother was the core centre, and the story on our hero’s side was much more about Lorraine,” Cowan says. “And it was about a witch, Bathsheba, and this old woman downstairs and a girl who slit her wrists. This one is taking more of a shift towards a male point of view and male relationships. Patrick is doing much more of the heroics. There’s a little story in the movie about Ed Warren and the relationship with his father. And the demon that you’ll see is male-orientated. So there’s a much more male theme to this movie.”

Well, that makes a refreshing change, eh ladies...? But don’t worry, Vera Fermiga (Lorraine Warren) hasn’t been rendered completely redundant. And she’s banging the drum for this movie so hard she’s in danger of wearing out the skin...

“Honestly, what’s the point of a sequel unless you can out-gross, out-story, out-heart the original?” Fermiga says. “We were so eager to bring our A+ games and strive for more, push boundaries and reach further and go deeper. We really go for it this time around, and I’m very proud of it. I think it’s unlike any horror film you will ever see. It has those elements from the first one but it’s so much more captivating – we push it into a different arena. There’s a lot of humour, there’s romance... there’s even a musical part. It’s outrageously eclectic, and horrifying! I just saw it yesterday for the first time and boy... I had the worst night’s sleep of my life!”

Paranormal investigator Maurice Grosse.



OUT OF ENFIELD

The true story behind *The Conjuring 2*

What took place at 284 Green Street, Enfield, between 1977 and 1979 still divides opinion.

It began in earnest, according to the Hodgson family, on the night of 5 September 1977, when 11-year-old Janet saw a chest of drawers inexplicably slide across her bedroom floor. Over the months that followed events escalated, with Janet allegedly levitating and speaking in an old man’s voice.

Numerous visitors backed up the family’s accounts. A policewoman told BBC Scotland of seeing a chair, “come off the floor nearly half an inch” and “slide off to the right about three-and-a-half to four feet”. *Mirror* reporter Doug Bence and photographer Graham Morris say they saw Lego bricks flying about – one of which hit Morris in the face. And the Society for Psychical Research’s Guy Lyon Playfair (who wrote a book on the case, *This House Is Haunted*) and colleague Maurice Grosse claim to have witnessed phenomena such as furniture spinning on the spot and coins dropping out of the air.

However, other researchers were unconvinced. One secretly filmed Janet Hodgson bending spoons herself... Decades later, she has admitted to carrying out a little fakery, feeling pressurised to please people by providing proof, but insists that 98% of what transpired at her childhood home was authentic poltergeist activity.

Will the eventual box office receipts give the producers sleepless nights? Unlikely. Possessed-doll *Conjuring* spin-off *Annabelle* raked in over \$250 million in 2014; a follow-up may be lensing by the time you read this. So can we expect more movies set in the Warrenverse? Highly likely. And the next one might not even have anything to do with possession or restless spirits...

“I think the notion would be to take it off in a different direction again,” says Cowan. “Still the same idea with the Warrens, but find something fresh. There’s a ton of information – they’ve got werewolf stories! There’s lots of different directions to go with them...” ●

The Conjuring 2 opens on 17 June.

Robert Kirkman's **OUTCAST** aims to do for exorcisms what *The Walking Dead* did for zombies. Joseph McCabe brings holy water to the show's set...

WHATEVER POSSESSED

It's a balmy autumn afternoon in sleepy Chester, South Carolina. Like so many small Southern towns these days, half the businesses have shut down and those that remain attract few costumers. Down

Chester's main street come two figures – a middle-aged minister and a younger, wide-eyed man. They knock on the door of a local pet store, inside of which lies a dead parakeet in a cage... and a shopkeeper who may or may not be possessed by a demon.

What an excellent day for an exorcism.

For horror fans, Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* is more than just a bestselling comic and a global television phenomenon. It's what made the world fall in love with zombies. But can Kirkman's *Outcast* do the same for tales of demonic possession? It's a more specific subgenre, and one many would argue hasn't been given its due on screen since Linda Blair's head spun like a top in William Friedkin's 1973 shocker *The Exorcist*. →

YOU?





BARNES AND NOBLE

Outcast's Patrick Fugit on summoning his inner exorcist for the show...

What kind of a person is Kyle Barnes?

▲ When we meet him, he's at sort of his low point in life. He has a dark history with possession. His mother was possessed, and everybody in town sort of knows that. Just under a year prior to the pilot Kyle had a very violent incident in his house with his wife and his child, and there's a lot of mystery surrounding that. So Kyle is sort of plagued by a bad reputation and possession and darkness. But Kyle's a goodhearted beacon of light that's sort of contained at the moment by darkness.

Robert Kirkman has said demonic possession may be a real phenomenon. What's your take on it?

▲ I don't know. The way Kyle feels about it is he's seen it with his own eyes. But I think that there's enough pain around those memories that he's tried to smooth over the mental scarring by saying it was mental illness, that his mother was sick, imbalanced or something like that. And obviously the Reverend is all in. He believes in God and the devil and demons.

How does he explain the effect he has on people?

▲ It's only through the first three episodes that he's discovering along with the Reverend that he has sort of an inexplicable effect on these demons, these possessed people. Kyle believes one way, that's all logic. And the Reverend believes the other way, which is all religion. And they have to sort of come together in the middle.



Even Banksy had to start somewhere.

"That movie," laughs *Outcast* producer-director Howard Deutch when he speaks with *SFX* on the show's set. "I needed to take a valium after I saw it. I was young and I was like, 'I'm never gonna be able to go to sleep!' Even though her head spun around and she spat pea soup and all that shit, I believed it because of how they earned it. The whole idea, the whole freshness of it. The faith, and good and evil, the characters – Ellen Burstyn and Max von Sydow – all of it, it worked. It clearly worked."

"And by the way," he adds, "when the studio saw the movie, they weren't gonna release it. So it shows you what people know."

These days they know better. As is evident in the decision to produce a series based on Kirkman's 2014 comic book about a young man, Kyle Barnes (played by *Gone Girl's* Patrick Fugit), with the power to cast out the devil in others, but who struggles with the demons that have plagued him and his family since he was a small boy. In his search for peace, he partners with a wannabe religious healer, the Reverend Anderson (*Life On Mars'* Philip Glenister), and the two embark on a mission to put Kyle's powers to good use. In so doing, both men call into question their long-held individual beliefs.

"Anderson," explains Deutch, "is selling himself a bill of goods. He's left his family and his own son, given everything up in his life to do God's work. He discovers, on this journey of his, that he's a fraud, that it's not working. That crisis of faith may be symbolic or representative of how other people feel and



it may not. But that's a real issue for a lot of people. I don't think we're selling it one way or the other. He's just a guy who's experiencing that."

As for Kyle Barnes, "Patrick's character never believed for a second. He's constantly a reminder, because he has the power, that it isn't about faith. Anderson becomes dependent on Patrick, and

resents that. Because he thinks he's the one who's doing this, and he discovers he's not. He's delusional. He refuses to accept that his faith has let him down. A lot of people are like that. So it's a really rich area to explore."

Of Fugit, Deutch says, "It's very difficult to find an actor who's pure. There's acting and then there's channelling and owning a character. He channels this character. He doesn't have to act it, he can be it. Because in his back pocket he has this sense of goodness. If you're gonna cast a guy who's gotta fight evil just by the essence of him, you couldn't find a more perfect candidate."

DEMONIC POWERS

Kyle's powers first emerged when his life was threatened by his own mother, herself apparently driven by a demon. After rendering her catatonic, he was placed in a foster home. Now a grown man, he finds history repeating itself when his wife, and the mother of his child, attacked him.

"He has no sense of self-worth," says Deutch of Kyle. "No sense of purpose and no feeling of

Will he be reciting "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."?



“It’s scary as hell, but this show is about relating to these characters”

value. How would you feel if your own mother tried to kill you? He doesn't even want to leave his house. He doesn't want to get dressed. The only person that makes him feel like he's worthy of anything is Anderson. Anderson is like a father figure to him and makes him feel that maybe he has a chance to be somebody. Not nobody.

“On the other hand, Anderson feels like he's a rock star. He's a pillar of the community. He's got his church groupies, those old ladies who follow him everywhere. He's dependent on Kyle to accomplish what he wants to accomplish. So this dance they do is an interesting kind of relationship. It's what I think is the best part of the show. It's very compelling, and it's reminiscent of *The X-Files*' Mulder and Scully. It's nitro and glycerin. It's fireworks. That's what I love about it. It's not about special effects, it's not about the supernatural. That's a part of it.”

Deutch sees in Kirkman a man as genuine as the characters he creates:

“Oscar Wilde used to say, ‘You might as well be yourself, because everybody else is taken.’ It's hard to just be yourself. But that's what Robert Kirkman reminds me of – a guy who

knows who he is. He's from Kentucky, of pioneer stock, a midwestern guy. It does not in any way interest him to be famous at all. He's a nerd. He's a guy who writes these characters in his comics and that's what he's thrilled by.”

READY TO TREMBLE

In the case of *Outcast*, what appears to thrill Kirkman is the chance to explore the roots of faith, and the dichotomy between those who believe and those who don't. All the while scaring audiences senseless.

“It doesn't feel derivative,” Deutch assures us. “I know it's not *The Exorcism Of Emily Rose* and all that crap. But I don't care whether it's horror or comedy or a musical, it's about the writing, the story, and the characters. Then it can be a horror, a comedy, a romance. But the trunk of the tree for me is the story and the characters. Then the branches are the divisions and categories.”

A veteran of '80s teen favourites like *Pretty In Pink* and *Some Kind Of Wonderful*, Deutch has inadvertently become something of a horror TV specialist in recent years, having directed numerous episodes of *True Blood* and *American Horror Story*.

“I used to do *American Horror Story*, which is shocking. I did them and I'm proud of them. It's a great show, but their goal is to shock you... This show is not about shocking you. They're gonna sell it like a horror show, and it's horrific – it's scary as hell. But this show is about relating to these characters.

“And then,” Deutch warns us, “you'll get shocked.” ●

Outcast airs on Fox from 7 June.



MAN OF GOD

Philip Glenister on keeping the faith...

How would you describe the Reverend?

▲ Reverend Anderson is the local preacher boy. He's quite an upstanding figure within the community. He specialises in exorcisms. We're on episode five right now, and he's out to prove that what he does is worthwhile. During the course of the series we come to see that he starts questioning his own beliefs and his own faith and his own ability in doing what he does.

Did you learn anything from watching “real” exorcists?

▲ No. I know they're on YouTube. I need to look at them... When I was shooting the pilot I had a few days off and I was watching TV in my hotel room and I started watching some of these religious channels with these preachers. I was kind of riveted by their power, their ability to sell this idea to their flock, if you like. It's a real performance. In episode two I do a big three-page sermon warning about demons. So I played that deadly fire and brimstone. And I thought, “This is Elvis in a dog collar!”

What's your relationship with religion?

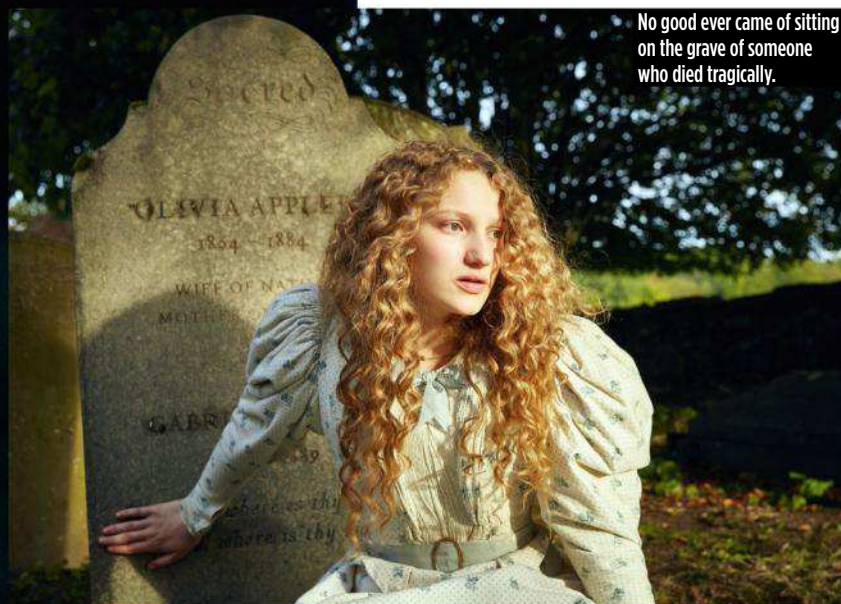
▲ I don't have one.

Does it have a relationship with you?

▲ Not if I can help it... I respect people who have faith. Personally, I never was a church-going kid, didn't come from a religious family. And as I got older and saw the role religion has played in the instability of our planet... I don't personally have a lot of time for it.

New BBC drama
THE LIVING AND THE DEAD
is “Thomas Hardy
with ghosts”, as creator
Ashley Pharoah tells
Richard Edwards

Victorian HORROR Story



No good ever came of sitting on the grave of someone who died tragically.

Most ghost stories are short," says Ashley Pharoah, creator of BBC One's spooky new drama *The Living And The Dead*.

"It's, 'Oh my god, there's a ghost!' End of story. So when the head of drama at BBC Wales said, 'What about doing a Victorian ghost series?' I was a little bit lukewarm! How do you come back every week and do that? Do they want Jack the Ripper? Foggy London streets? In winter?"

The fact you're reading this means it shouldn't be a huge surprise that Pharoah, one of the brains behind *Life On Mars* and *Ashes To Ashes*, worked out a way around the problem.

"I was about to say no," he continues, "then I thought, what if we flipped the tropes and did it in midsummer, in the countryside at the time when the Industrial Revolution came and changed everything, when Darwin was essentially saying that God was dead. Then tell the stories about the place I'm from, the West Country, in an interesting new genre which I hadn't done before. That got me excited. By the time I got home from lunch I'd phoned the head of drama back and said, 'Okay, Thomas Hardy with ghosts!'"

Moving to the country

The Living And The Dead is based in rural Somerset in 1894. Chief protagonist Nathan Appleby (*Merlin* and *Humans* star Colin Morgan) is a young, London-based psychologist who returns to his family home, Shepzoy House, to take over running the estate with his wife Charlotte (*Glue* and *Stonemouth's* Charlotte Spencer). Country life proves a huge contrast to their cosmopolitan lives in the capital – the farm is still run as it would have ➔



"It Sent A Lot Of People Over The Edge..."

COLIN MORGAN is in high spirits

How will we see Nathan evolve throughout the series?

✦ One of the things we see on TV now, like in *Breaking Bad*, for example, is a good guy turning bad. It's so satisfying to see something like that, that evolution of a character or the breakdown of them. I was really geared up for seeing a man go through something and be very different at the end from where he was at the beginning. It's something Ashley and me talked about a lot, what would be the event that leads a man to do the things he does and become the thing he becomes by the end of the series.

Did you try to learn a lot of the history of the period?

✦ We had historical advisors available to us on set, making sure everything was accurate. At that time the changes that were happening in farming and machinery were huge. People were suspicious of them, and the times were changing in religion as well. People were really confused and it sent a lot of people over the edge. It was a time of upheaval, and not everyone reacted well to it.

Was it challenging to immerse yourself in the more fantastical sides of the story?

✦ As the story goes on, it becomes more clear why Nathan involves himself and becomes convinced of that world. Because at that time, there was so much about spiritualism and mediums and all these different methods of contacting the dead. But Nathan is in the world of science, and thinks of these things with an open mind. But I feel like his inclusion in that world comes from a deep place of grief and a pain that he wasn't quite sure still existed in him until he came home to the house he grew up in. There's a lot of trauma attached to that house that hasn't come to light by episode one. It becomes clearer as it goes on.



There was something off about this Neighbourhood Watch meeting, if he could only put his finger on it...

been hundreds of years earlier, the lives of its numerous labourers as-yet untouched by the rise of machines. In such an environment, the introduction of steam-powered labour aids and new technology like the camera were always bound to make waves.

"I've always been fascinated by that time," explains Pharoah. "To get your head around a way of life that really hadn't changed for centuries, then in about a decade it changed completely. That's why I find the reverend character [in the show] interesting. He's an intelligent educated man who's just read Darwin – but what does that do to your headspace?"

"I wanted to get a sense that everything is changing. People were obsessed with the afterlife and the occult and mesmerism and mediums. Photography was starting to take off, and you could record people's voices. Some of the stuff I googled is horrific. When people died, they dressed them up in their clothes and propped them up and took photos. There were dead babies dressed up in finery. They used to record people's voices and put them beside graves for a time. The Victorians were weird about death, so it's an incredible time to look at within this genre."

Nathan is the Scully in a world of Mulders, a man of science whose world view is forcibly shifted through the series. In episode one, for example, he encounters a girl who's going through an even more extreme personality shift than your average teenager. It couldn't have anything to do with the malevolent spirit of a recently deceased local criminal, could it?

"Nathan's our scepticism," says Pharoah. "I thought the idea of making this guy a

psychologist in London was interesting. It was a new science to study, and the people that were being presented to that new science were often people that had had their heads fucked by people obsessed with the occult. That seems a really interesting character to take on a journey. In episode one he's a complete sceptic, but even by the end of that story he's thinking, 'Shit, what did I see?' By the end of episode six, he has gone completely barking. He's seeing things that are just too terrible."

In fact, says Pharoah, the initially rational Nathan (who's lost his first wife and child by the time we meet him in the story) is actually the thread pulling together all the disparate spooks going bump in the night.

"There are stories of the week," he explains, "but as the series goes on it becomes clear that each story is about Nathan Appleby. His personality seems to be generating them. The hardest thing was turning them all into a series."

Charlotte Spencer plays Nathan's wife, Charlotte Appleby.





“The Victorians were weird about death, so it’s an incredible time to look at within this genre”

Each ghost story couldn’t be a standalone story – it had to echo and wrap itself around our series arc. You could just drop in and watch episode four and you’d understand it, but [if you’ve watched it all] you’d understand it a lot more because you’d know why that certain ghost story is where it is.”

Finding the audience

Primetime BBC One is well known for its period drama. It’s less well-known, however, for its bone-chilling horror – a fact Pharoah

and the team behind the show were well aware of. “You do have to think about that normal BBC One audience who wouldn’t naturally go to watch *Nina Forever*,” he laughs. “We have to realise we’re not making it for a horror audience, though we’re really hoping that some of those people that wouldn’t normally watch BBC One will come and have a look – that’s down to us, really, to grab them.

“We’re very conscious that we’re not making a movie. You can’t go in horror guns blazing because that leaves you nowhere else to go. How would you come back next week? So the

word we used on set rather than horror, was eerie. MR James is not that explicit, and that kind of moodiness is what we tried to get, certainly in the first two or three episodes. If you point a camera at a beautiful wheatfield on a lovely July day, that’s a really pretty image. If you let that shot stay a bit beyond its welcome and stick a few crows on the soundtrack, we enter into eerie.”

As for that Victorian setting, don’t expect a prim-and-proper period drama. The whole point is that the characters should feel modern – and behave as they would now.

“I didn’t want BBC period speak to get between the characters and the audience,” says Pharoah. “And also, I went back and read a lot of Thomas Hardy, which was set in that period. His dialogue feels incredibly modern. If you look at a page of Hardy it’s not period speak. And I wanted it to be very clear. I wanted a marriage that’s as modern and sexy as I could get away with in a period drama. So although Nathan and Charlotte behave as they would when they’re working, when the last servant goes home at night and the doors are locked, they have a very modern relationship.”

If there’s one thing in *The Living And The Dead* that is supposed to feel old, however, it’s the house. Casting the building meant looking at “about 50 houses”, before settling on Horton Court, a National Trust property in South Gloucestershire. “It hasn’t been lived in for 20 years, so it’s literally falling apart,” explains Pharoah. “It’s on its own, there’s no traffic, and it had this pond next to it, which in my mind I wanted. The National Trust had so little money that the roof was falling off, and there literally were bats in the attic – there still are. Within reason they said we could do what we want. It was completely perfect casting for us.”

Not least because Horton Court appears to have some hauntings of its own.

“We were working on an episode and I said to the sound engineer, ‘What’s that noise?’ Pharoah recalls. “He said, ‘That is an actual haunting.’ Just out of interest he’d left his sound equipment running all night when we’d all gone home, and he recorded these really weird noises – they sounded like human voices and he’s used them in the mix.

“And there were a few other weird things that happened. The oddest one, they were filming at two in the morning and they heard the telephone going. Everyone got grumpy and wanted to go home and they’re looking for this phone but couldn’t find it. The next day they said they hadn’t had a phone line in there since the 1950s. I don’t think of myself as particularly susceptible to that stuff, but I wouldn’t have hung around there on my own late at night!” ●

The Living And The Dead comes to BBC One in June.



“You know, I really preferred you without the beard.”

Brought



To Book

LISA TUTTLE

The American émigré on her new novel set in Victorian London

Words by Jonathan Wright // Photography by Kevin Nixon

Novelists often talk about creating protagonists who seem to act independently, but this had never happened to Lisa Tuttle. Until, that is, she met one Miss Lane, late Victorian-era resident of 203A Gower Street, London, and one half of the Jespersen and Lane detecting duo. “She’s not me, but I hear her voice and her story comes with her,” says Tuttle.

And quite a story it is, as George RR Martin realised when Tuttle sent a Jespersen and Lane short story, *The Curious Affair Of The Dead Wives*, to her co-author and friend for inclusion in *Rogues*, a 2014 collection the big beard co-edited with Gardner Dozois. “George said, ‘This feels like the beginning of a novel, are you intending to write more?’” says Tuttle. “‘Oh not a novel,’ I said.”

Sometimes, in the best possible way, things don’t work out. After toying with the idea of shorter fiction, Tuttle realised a Jespersen and Lane novel would actually be far easier to sell, and the rather wonderful *The Curious Affair Of The Somnambulist And The Psychic Thief* was born. It’s an origin story set in 1893, which shows the duo – clever and composed Miss Lane, and eccentric, hyperactive, “excessively tall” Jasper Jespersen – teaming up.

The choice of year was important. “One of the reasons I’m so attracted to that period is it was getting to the point where there was much more resistance to the Victorian certainties – ‘You have to do this’ – and much more awareness, certainly on the part of women, that it doesn’t always work out.” Especially for spinsters at a time when people talked about the “surplus women problem”.

VICTORIAN VALUES

“[It’s] not that there were too many more women than men, but the number of men who could actually support a wife: there weren’t enough,” Tuttle explains. “Plus you often had women who would be looking after their parents because the other sisters got married off, and they were the ones who all the family duties devolved on, and their parents are dead and what do they do?”

For the wealthy, this wasn’t necessarily a problem, but for even middle-class women without capital, such scenarios could be potentially disastrous. “She is in a society where she has to be constantly on her guard, she’s vulnerable,” says Tuttle of Lane.

That doesn’t mean she’s weak. As Jespersen and Lane’s first adventure unfolds, it’s clear Lane, for all her partner has elements of Holmes about him, is no bumbling but brave Watson. Instead, she’s smart, self-assured and

practical, a proto-feminist largely unfazed by a case involving a sleepwalker, missing mediums and decidedly eldritch happenings.

Which may make her a little more like Tuttle than the author concedes because the American’s career has been full of moments when she took a leap. Growing up in Houston, Texas, she remembers, she was somehow aware writers didn’t make a lot of money, but she decided to become an author anyway. “I realised, ‘Well, I may have to have a job so that I can then write the books I like,’” she says.

Her career got off to a flying start and she began selling stories while she was still in college. In 1971, she attended the Clarian Writers Workshop where her tutors included Samuel R Delaney, Joanna Russ and Harlan Ellison. In 1974, she won the John W Campbell Award for Best New Writer. “When you’re 18 or 19, you don’t know, you think that’s how it works,” she says when *SFX* suggests her younger self didn’t realise how lucky she was.

NORTH OF THE BORDER

In 1981, she married fellow writer Christopher Priest and moved to the UK. When the marriage failed, she stayed, thinking to herself, “I’ve got a book contract, I’m writing a book, I’m here so I think I’ll stay here and see if I can make it, continuing to be a freelance writer.”

In 1990, possibly to avoid writing another *Casualty* novelisation (*Megan’s Story* under the pseudonym Laura Waring, since you’re asking), she and new partner, crime writer Colin Murray, moved to rural Scotland and a house “in the middle of a forest on the shores of a loch”. When *SFX* meets her in London, it’s a rare foray south.

Throughout her career, certain threads have run through her work, notably feminism (she’s written an *Encyclopaedia Of Feminism*), along with what you might call a slipstream sensibility, which has permeated her fantasy, SF and horror. “One thing that always appealed to me, and still does, is the intrusion of something weird, strange, inexplicable into the normal,” she says, “whether that’s time travel or a ghost or madness, I like all those things.”

On which subject the next, as yet untitled Jespersen and Lane book will find the duo in East Anglia. What could possibly happen in such workaday surroundings? “It involves the Shrieking Pits of North Norfolk, and witches, and a man who’s trying to set up a school of ancient British wisdom,” she says. It sounds great. ●

The Curious Affair Of The Somnambulist And The Psychic Thief is published by Jo Fletcher Books on 16 June.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Novelist

Born

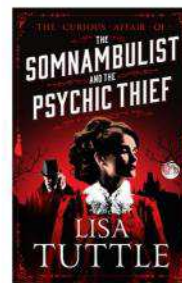
→ 16 September 1952, Houston, USA

Greatest Hits

→ Tuttle’s many books include *Windhaven* (co-written with George RR Martin) and *The Pillow Friend* (1996), a novel she rates for all she now finds it “too weird”.

Random Fact

→ In 1982, Tuttle turned down a Nebula for short story *The Bone Flute* after discovering fellow author George Guthridge was actively campaigning for his own story, *The Quiet*.



“THE
INTRUSION OF
SOMETHING
WEIRD INTO
THE NORMAL
APPEALS TO ME”

JOE HILL'S ANTI-RULES OF WRITING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILL IRELAND

Want to write **HORROR FICTION** for a living? Need some advice? Maybe some rules to follow? Let Joe Hill help. Sort of...

“**C**an you write us a list of rules on how to write horror?” said the good people at *SFX*. And because I’m not above being flattered, I immediately said, “Yes, of course.”

Which just goes to show you shouldn’t let your chin be tickled by journalists, no matter how charming they might be, because the last thing the world needs is another damn list of rules for writing.

For a start, no one has ever outdone the rules in William Strunk and EB White’s *The Elements Of Style*. It may date from 1918 in its oldest iteration, but it remains the definitive guide to composing clear, emphatic prose. Every writer should have a copy on the shelf next to a really good dictionary. The only other list you need is *Elmore Leonard’s 10 Rules Of Writing*. It’s not that his rules really matter, but they’re so much fun to read – Rule 1: “Never open a book with weather” – that you shouldn’t deny yourself the pleasure.

If only Leonard hadn’t encouraged every other writer on the planet to try to come up with a short list of easy-to-tweet, Buzzfeed-friendly aphorisms. I’ve read them all and even enjoyed a few because I love to hear other writers talk about their work, but the only conclusion I’ve drawn is that everyone’s method is unique to them alone.

Here’s the grisly truth: the rules I have for myself may do you no good at all. Each story is its own maze, so what good will it do to tell you how I escaped mine? Really, you still want advice? Okay, here goes...

GET TO KNOW THE LAY OF THE LAND

You want to learn how to write a great horror story? Go out and buy every volume of Stephen Jones’s annual *Best New Horror* anthology, and then read every story. That’s about 10,000 pages of reading. It won’t go down as fast and easily as a click-bait list feature, but when you’re done, you’re going to know what makes a great horror story. Better still, that knowledge will be branded deep, into your unconscious, where it will do you the most good. If horror’s not your thing, then learn the local customs of what you *do* like. There are similar collections covering just about every possible genre, from highbrow lit-fic to chrome-plated SF to the filthiest erotica.

For myself, quite a bit of what I know about writing short stories I learned from reading *The Complete Stories* of Bernard Malamud... and rereading it. And then I went further, and read my favourites a third time, making notes in the margins about how he achieved certain effects. To me a good sentence is one that sounds like Malamud wrote it. ➔



BE PATIENT

Writing is slow, mindful, peaceful work and you aren't going to learn the craft by reading someone's cheery how-to list. If you write every day of your life, you will never be done learning, and you will have only absorbed a tiny percentage of what there was to discover. If that idea excites you – the idea of all that long, slow, interior work – maybe you're a writer. If that notion depresses you, maybe you aren't.

Every step forward is a step forward. There's no wasted time. A useless scene is the first draft of a much better scene you may write next week, or next year. A failed novel (I've written my share of them) may well contain the seeds of a future triumph... or several future triumphs.

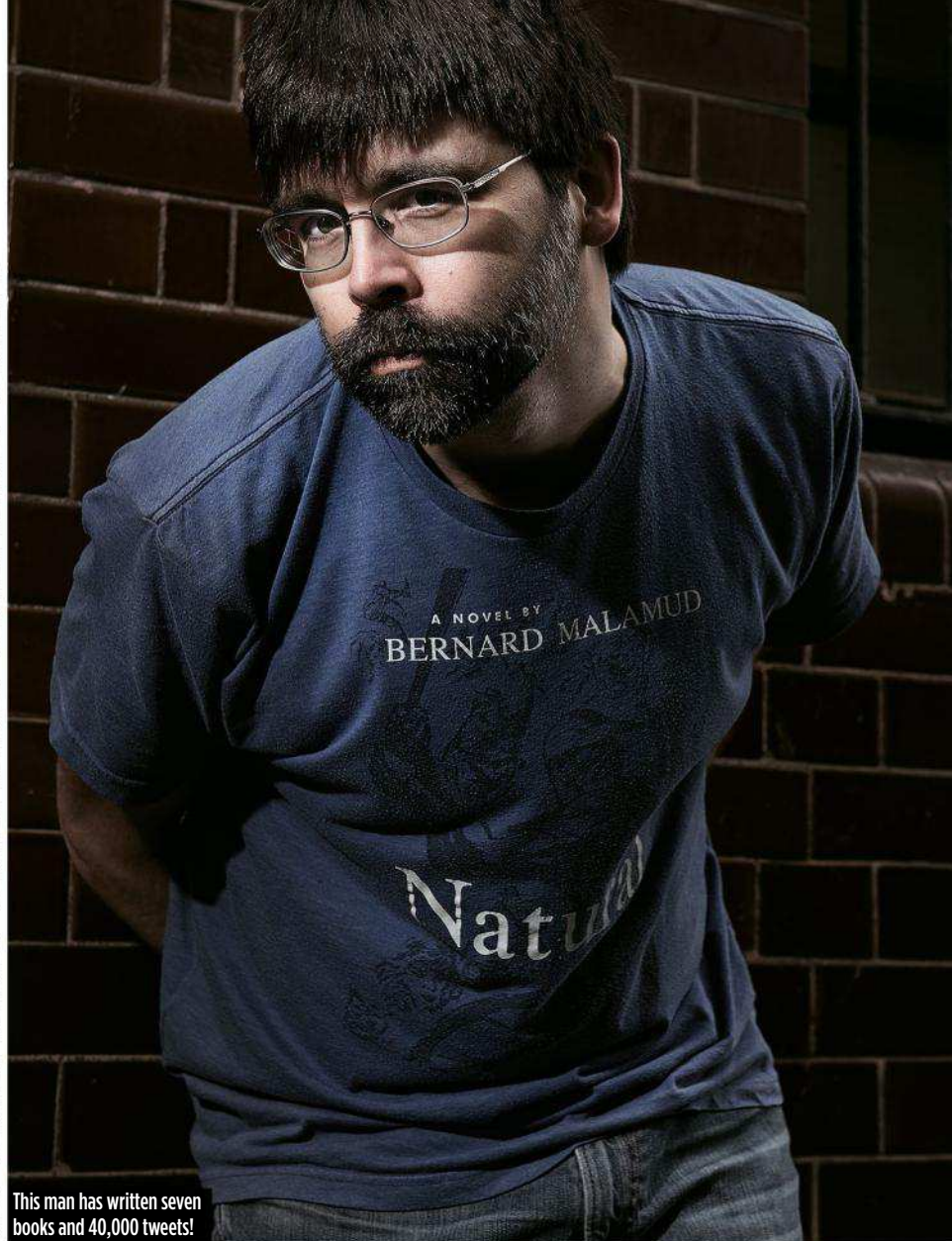
FORGET ABOUT RULES

Especially when you're writing a first draft, you have to forget anything that might hold you back from getting a few hundred words written every day. I say again that the act of writing a story is the same as trying to find your way out of a maze. If you don't keep walking, you can't get out. So just keep going. The worst thing that can happen is you reach a dead end, and then all you have to do is retreat to the last fork in the path, and try a different trail.

When I was working on *The Fireman*, I spent an entire month constructing this one intensely suspenseful sequence. My heroine sneaks past guards in the dead of night, creeps into the bell tower of a church. She uses her bow to shoot an arrow with a note inside it, in an attempt to land it on an island that's down the hill and across a hundred feet of water. If anyone sees her, it will cost her terribly. Great thriller stuff, right? The morning after I finished the scene, I realised it would be a whole lot easier for her to send the note over with a friend, and it would save me 50 pages in a book that was already very long. So was that month a waste of time? Nah. I learned a lot about my hero, how she thinks, and how she deals with pressure. It informed my understanding of the character, which in turn helped me to write the last third of the novel.

STAY OFFLINE

I know how distractible I am and how narcissistic, so I try to avoid the internet, and especially social networks, for as long as possible. Jonathan Franzen has been widely mocked for his contention that no one with an internet connection is likely to get any good writing done, but who can maintain a steady line of thought with the circus going by outside their window? That's the world wide web.



This man has written seven books and 40,000 tweets!

Side note: isn't it interesting, how many of our words for getting online bring to mind drug abuse? A connection is who you visit to score. Do a couple of lines and you're wired. How much difference is there between the dopamine hit of a "tweak" and the dopamine hit of a "tweet?" I say all this as an experienced junkie, someone who has posted more than 40,000 tweets himself.

BE AWESOME

Like it or not, we're living in BuzzFeed's world now. If the internet made a junkie out of me, I've got plenty of company. People's attention spans have never been so short. With that in mind, when it comes to editing and rewriting, I try to ask myself, for every scene, every page, every paragraph: what's awesome here?

In this context, "awesome" is an umbrella term for anything that will keep the reader flipping pages in the face of all those other bright and shiny distractions. As a commercial entertainer, I want the book to feel like a car going off a cliff. A threat is awesome; a car that

runs on human souls is awesome; a seduction is awesome; a single evocative five-word sentence can be awesome (short sentences detonate like grenades). Argument is always intense, and "intense" is all but synonymous with "awesome" for our purposes. Confessions are awesome. Reversals are particularly awesome

FINALLY

In fiction, sadly, everything is not awesome. Warm agreement between characters is almost never awesome. A first chapter in which our heroine wakes up, looks at herself in the mirror (perhaps to admire her own firm breasts) and makes breakfast is not awesome. Guess what? It won't be awesome in chapter two either. And if a scene isn't awesome, you can skip it. If you don't, your reader will... along with everything that comes after. They'll put the book down and go look at a list of "21 Dogs Who Are Sick Of Your Crap" on BuzzFeed instead. ●

The Fireman by Joe Hill is published on 7 June and reviewed on p108.



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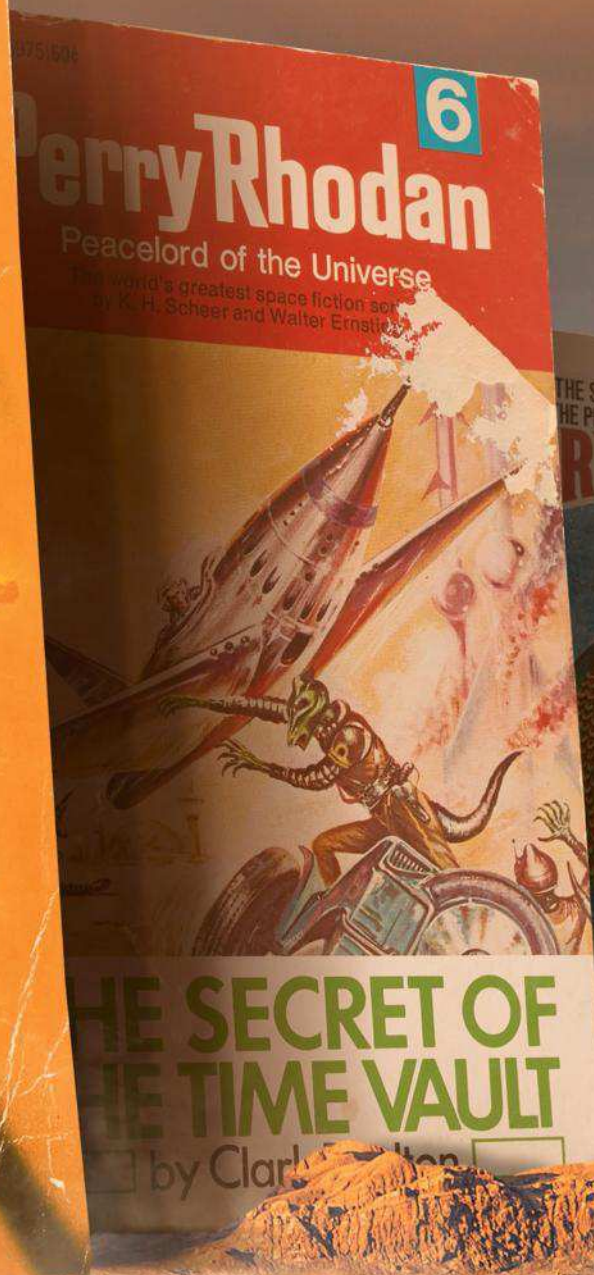
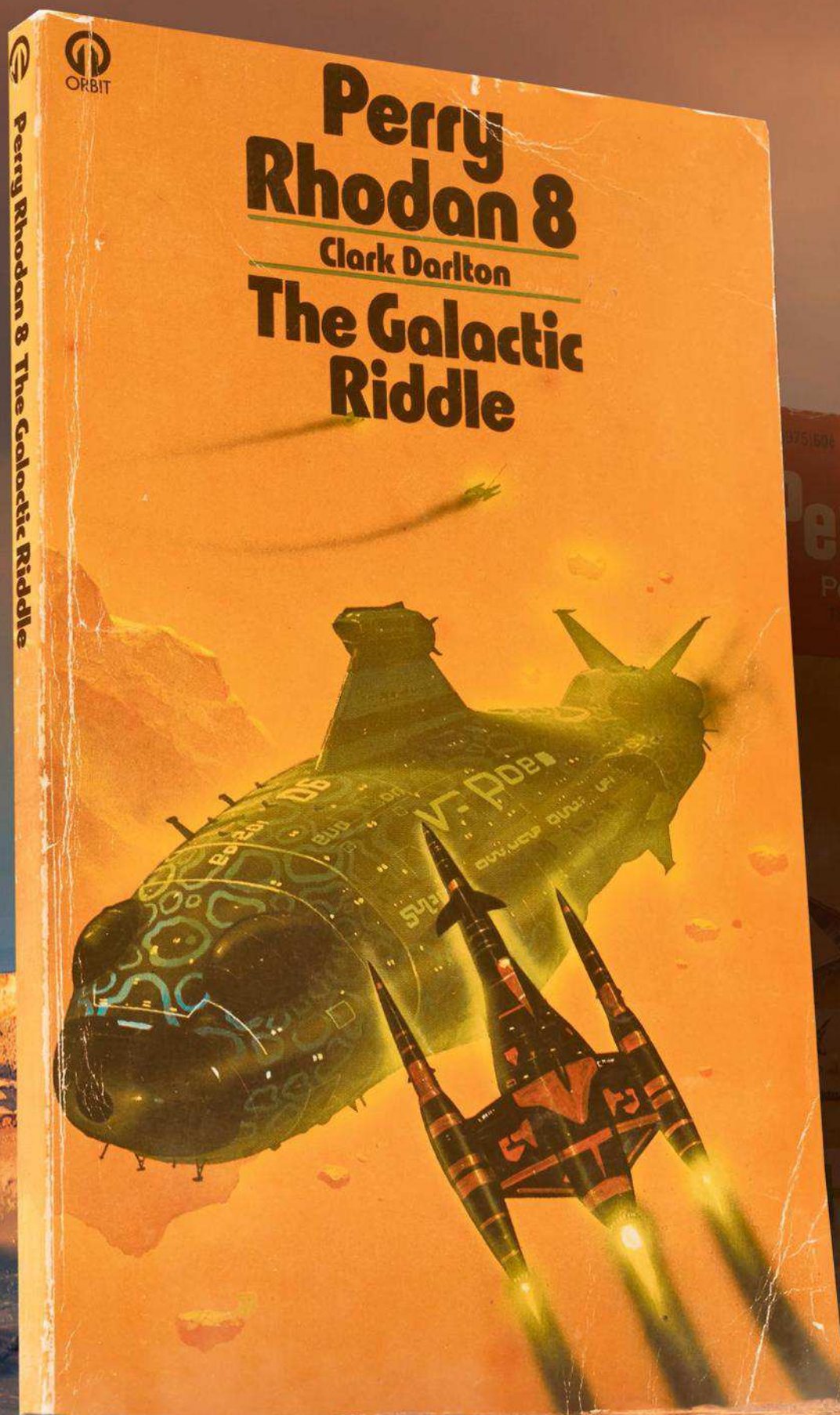
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PERRY RHODAN

Over half a century of adventures, nearly 3,000 books...
David Barnett shares the story of science
fiction's unsung hero

What are the longest running science fiction franchises? *Doctor Who*, certainly, even given its 16-year hiatus from TV screens. *Star Trek*, of course, with its many spin-offs since the original series began in 1966. *Star Wars*, obviously.

But none of them can hold a phaser to *Perry Rhodan*. If you're already howling "Whoooo?" into the void, you might be surprised to find you're in a minority, globally speaking. The *Perry Rhodan* series has sold an eye-watering one billion copies in the 55 years since it began.

A new book has been released since the very first one in the autumn of 1961 every week. Yes, you read that right. Every. Single. Week. That means a *Perry Rhodan* library in your home would have to accommodate somewhere in the region of 2,800 volumes. And you thought you had trouble finding shelf-space for Robert Jordan's *Wheel Of Time*.

To put that into even sharper context, if you started reading the series right now and managed a book a day (which wouldn't be difficult, as they average 25-30,000 words – they're novellas, really) it would take seven years and eight months to read the oeuvre. By which time, of course, they'd have released another 400 or so books.

All the way back in the first book, *Perry Rhodan* was an astronaut, on board the spaceship *Stardust* bound for the Moon – this was the early '60s,

“A new book has been released every week since autumn 1961”



remember, when the space race was the way for the US and the Soviet Union to flex their muscles at each other without actually having to chuck bombs around. The Moon was the ultimate prize and in the first novella, *Enterprise Stardust*, it was the Yanks what won it, eight years before they eventually did for real – though the action takes place in the then-futuristic world of 1971.

When Perry and his pals land on Luna, they don't just play golf, plant a flag and mumble some words for posterity. They happen to find a bloody big alien spaceship, marooned on the Moon. It belongs to the Arkonides, who consider humanity nothing more than war-mongering savages.

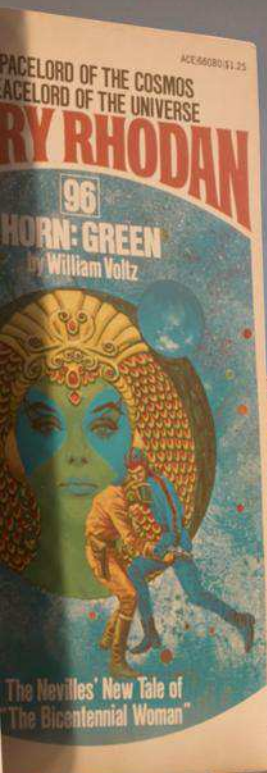
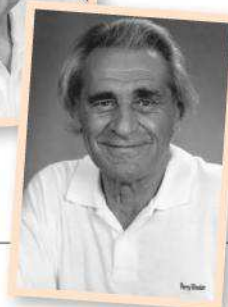
To cut an, um, fairly short story even shorter, Perry wins over the Arkonides, uses their presence and technology to unite an Earth on the brink of war, and opens up the doors for humanity's entry into a galactic wonderland of good old-fashioned rocket ship adventure. And thus begins the saga that has now become the intersection where space opera and soap opera meet, the longest-running continuous science fiction book series in history.



It's almost as impossible to summarise the events of nearly 3,000 books as it would be to boil down the various plots of *Coronation Street's* history into one piece, but suffice to say it's an epic like never before with a core cast of Rhodan, his friend (and sometimes rival) Bully, alien mascot Pucky, boffin Homer G Adams, and displaced aliens Thora and Krest.

Despite US Space Force Major Perry Rhodan being the archetypal square-jawed, corn-fed all-American hero, the series was conceived, is published and has its biggest fan-base in Germany... which is why you might not have heard of it.

KH Scheer and Walter Ernsting (who wrote as Clark Dalton) were two of Germany's most popular science fiction authors. In late 1960, they arranged a meeting →



to discuss a potential collaboration. Sputnik had been in orbit for four years; all eyes were on space and who was going to control it.

Scheer and Dalton had a more idealistic vision. The idea they came up with was rooted in Cold War paranoia, of course, but that would be the jumping off point for a galaxy-spanning future utopia. War on Earth would end, mankind would unite as a single world-entity, Terra, and our destiny would be in the stars.

A year later the first *Perry Rhodan* adventure hit the newsstands in Germany in the popular Hefroman (pulp booklet) format. And a new one came out every week after that, with a huge roster of writers contributing to the expanding universe.

According to Katrin Weil of *Perry Rhodan* publishers Pabel Moewig Verlag, the continued success of the series is down to what she calls the “cornerstones of serialisation and familiarity”.

She says, “Just like a television soap opera, it stirs up the curiosity of the reader who wants to know what happens next.”



There have been sporadic English-language publications of *Rhodan*, notably the run of paperbacks by Futura in the 1970s, but the series has very much been under the radar of most SF fans in the UK.

However that isn't the case in Germany and beyond. Gerold Schelm is from the *Perry Rhodan* Online Fan Club, in Germany, which attracts scholarly essays from fans – thousands of them.

“More than 35,000 articles have been produced by the fans so far, covering a huge part of what we call the Perryversum,” says Gerold. The fansite also hosts a wiki – Perrylopedia, obviously – that has become the go-to resource for a fictional universe that has become massive. Schelm says, “It has become so popular since it was established in 2004, that nowadays even the authors of the series use it as reference to get information about certain topics that they need to know to write new stories.”

John O'Neill is one of the founders of the *SF Site*, one of the earliest genre webzines, now editor at *Black Gate* magazine. He remembers *Perry Rhodan* fondly, being introduced to the books in 1975 by a school friend. He says: “There's definitely a strong element of nostalgia to *Perry Rhodan*, at least for me. *Perry Rhodan* is an unabashed space opera, hugely ambitious, with all of time and space (and multiple dimensions) as its canvas, and

NEO WORLD ORDER

Perry gets the reboot

→ In a bid to win new readers, a few years back the publishers launched the *Perry Rhodan Neo* series – retellings of the old adventures within a more modern framework, a way of tidying up continuity and representing the original stories with a fresher look.

Set in 2036 rather than the original series' 1971, the *Neo* series posits an overcrowded Earth facing very modern crises – climate change and terrorism – putting humanity on the brink of war.

From then on it's business as usual as Perry discovers the Arkonides stranded on the Moon, but all with a much more contemporary spin.

And if you want a taste of *Perry Rhodan*'s brand of “back to the future” retro SF, ebook editions of the Lemuria cycle of books, by author Hubert Haensel, started being released in English from late 2015.



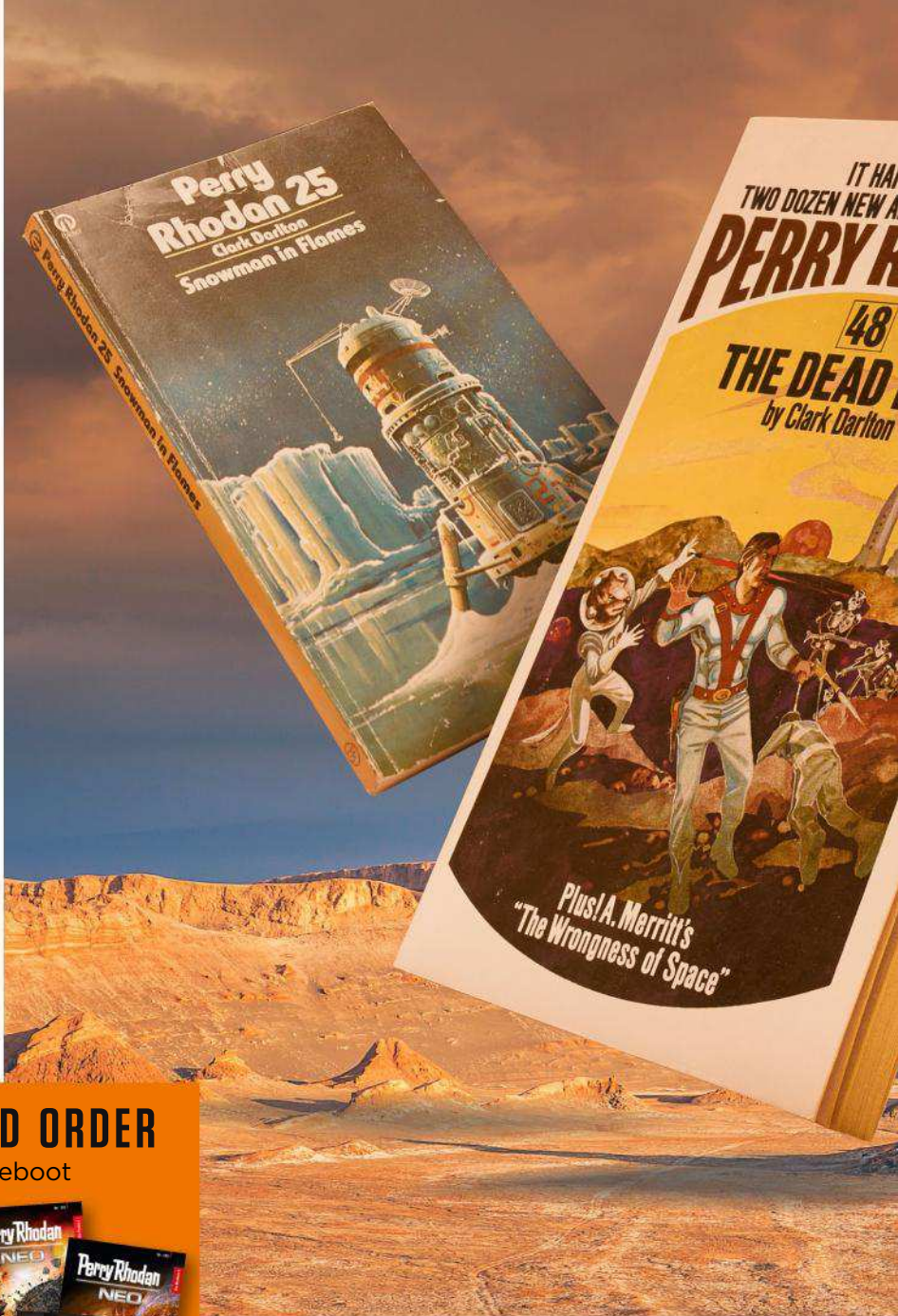
with 100-issue story arcs. This grew directly out of the pulp roots of science fiction, which date back to the 1930s, the ‘Buck Rogers’ era of SF serials, and *Perry Rhodan* made a very conscious effort to appeal to that audience. And widely succeeded, I think.”

The *Rhodan* books might be rooted in the shiny '60s, but they continued to be a roaring success through the '70s and '80s – which was when Verena Thomsen, one of the current writers, who lives near Heidelberg, first encountered them.

She says, “While the main setting of *Perry Rhodan* stays the same – there's always Perry Rhodan and his close friends – the stories within this setting vary strongly over time, always matching the tastes and interests of the readership, because they are also the tastes and interests of the authors.

“In the '70s classic Western-like adventures and spy stories got fewer, and instead a cosmic background was developed, with mighty entities fighting or playing against each other to gain power.

“In the '80s, this was taken even further, to fantastic landscapes and complex philosophies about the meaning of





LOST IN TRANSLATION

Perry smashes the language barrier

→ *Perry Rhodan's* English translations were down to the legendary science fiction "superfan" Forrest J Ackerman, and his German-born wife Wendayne. The pair met Walter Ernsting, one half of *Rhodan* creator team, at a book fair in Munich in 1965 (the year a low-budget movie adaptation of the first book was released in Germany, now largely detested by fans) and it was agreed that Ackerman would try to introduce the series to a US audience, the books translated by Wendayne.

Despite initial difficulties interesting publishers, who feared the books were too juvenile, too European and too short on word count, Ace decided to give them a go in 1969, publishing two novellas in one volume. Though it did well sales-wise, the series was dropped in 1978.

© REX (1)

“The juggernaut shows no sign of slowing: the short novels are still shifting 3.2 million a year”

life. In the '90s, things took up a bit more pace again, action got more important, just like in the movies with all their stunning new computer effects. Read *Perry Rhodan*, and you know what moved the people at that time.”

Perry Rhodan is what you might call uncomplicated SF. It was born in the years before the New Wave pioneered by Michael Moorcock's *New Worlds* magazine, which ushered in a more literary, thoughtful school of writing, and *Perry Rhodan* resolutely ignored it.

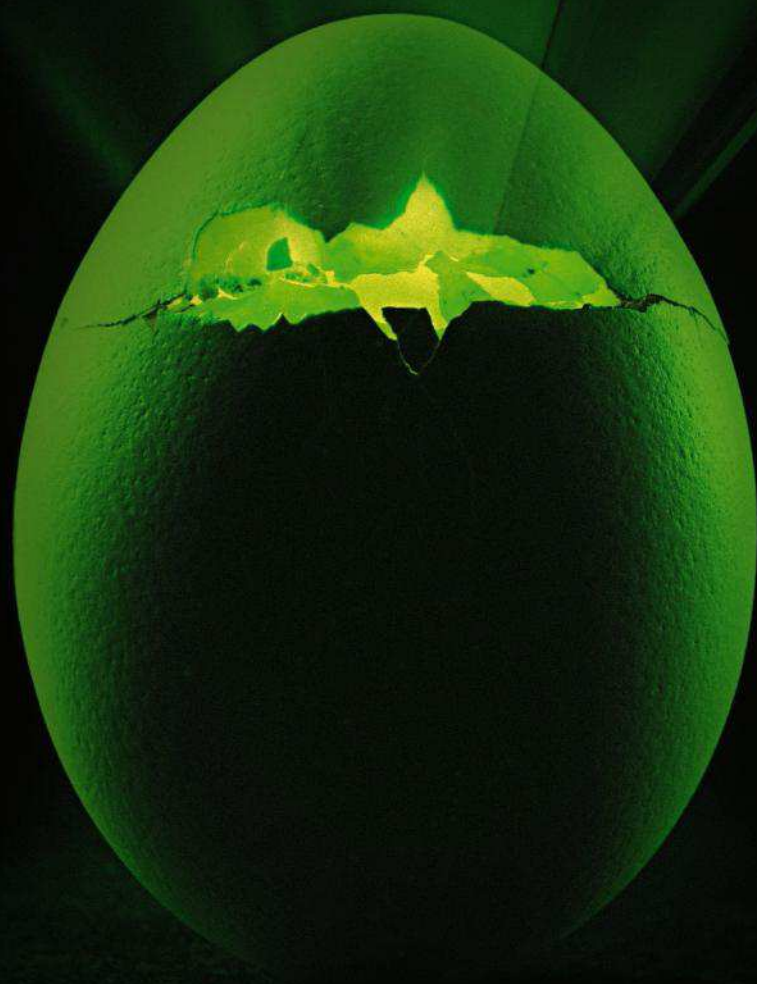
If you're the sort of reader – and let's face it, there's nothing wrong with this – who thinks a picture of a rocket on the cover of a book means there should be a rocket inside, then the *Perry Rhodan* series is for you. It's also for anyone who feels nostalgic about the shiny futures offered

to us by Golden Age science fiction, who loves good, honest SF adventure. But can they still appeal to a sophisticated SF audience today?

John O'Neill says: “*Perry Rhodan* dares to imagine what modern SF would be like if it hadn't decided to set aside its favourite toys and try and look more grown-up in the '50s.” “Sure they can still appeal!” Verena Themsen adds. “For one, the kind of science fiction we write – space opera – is mainly about creating ‘Sense of Wonder’. This is a feeling that doesn't have anything to do with which generation you belong to. If you encounter something that is at the same time unexpected and beautiful, both young and old will stand and stare.”

Although his early adventures are a part of SF history, the *Perry Rhodan* juggernaut shows no signs of slowing. The short novels are still shifting 3.2 million a year. The *Perry Rhodan* “reimagined” *Neo* series, 400,000 copies. The collected editions, 210,000. And that's not counting the one million ebooks sold every year. You can track down some of the old English language editions second hand, but with half a century of back-story to investigate, if you get hooked, don't say you weren't warned... ●

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2016

edited by Ian Berriman

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CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

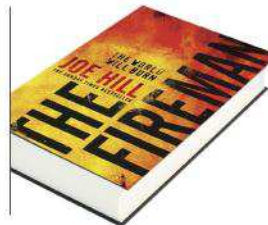
→ It's Steve vs Tony as the Avengers disassemble.



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→ Motor-mouthed mutant mercenary's meta Marvel movie makes magnificent mayhem. Mmm.



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THE FIREMAN

→ A spore causes folks to go up in flames in Joe Hill's latest novel.

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ SUPERB ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ AVERAGE ★★★★★ POOR ★★★★★ TERRIBLE

CINEMA

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

The Art Of War



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

12A | 147 minutes

► Directors Joe Russo, Anthony Russo

► Cast Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr, Scarlett Johansson, Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Elizabeth Olsen

❖ **“It’ll never work,” the world** scoffed. Cramming Iron Man, the Hulk, Thor and Captain America into one huge continuity before eventually uniting them as the Avengers was as mad as saying Leicester City could win the Premier League – an ambitious folly that would most likely be abandoned almost as soon as it had begun. How wrong we were.

Now, after eight years, 13 movies, a couple of TV spin-offs and two completed “Phases”, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has reached its zenith. *Captain America: Civil War* is up there with the best superhero movies ever made, a clash of the titans that manages to be fun, funny, poignant, action-packed, joyous,

surprising, edge-of-the-seat exciting, clever, intimate and an instant classic. In other words, it’s everything *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* isn’t.

These days “shared universe” is Hollywood’s favourite buzz phrase when it comes to building a franchise. But everyone else is playing catch-up with Marvel, which has written the blueprint for sprawling, complex, interlocking continuities. *Civil War* works because it’s the culmination of nearly a decade of meticulous planning and character development, playing out like a season finale in the brilliant, engaging serial that is the MCU.

Where other movies might need to waste an entire act establishing what makes its heroes and villains tick, this is packed with ready-made characters, each of whom land with fully-formed backstories and plausible motivations. And that doesn’t just apply to nominal leads Captain America and Iron Man – even the supporting players



Day 2,705 on the Crossrail project and the workers were getting tense.



Top Trumps: the movie.

are people we know *and* care about. If they’re in peril, we feel it.

While it’s hard to think of any other movies that give as many characters so much to do as *Civil War*, however, it’s unmistakably a Cap film. He’s the focus of the movie, its beating heart, its hero – *and* its villain. That’s important. If there’s a criticism you can throw at the MCU it’s that – Loki aside – its bad guys are nowhere near as memorable as its good guys. *Civil War* ingeniously sidesteps that inconvenient truth, loosely riffing on Mark Millar and Steve McNiven’s comic storyline to make

“Up there with the best superhero movies ever made”

Cap and Iron Man the nominal villains, opposite sides in a clash of ideologies – Tony Stark wants the Avengers to come under government control, Steve Rogers does not. *Civil War* is sophisticated



enough to deal in subtle shades of grey, allowing you to sympathise with both sides. It's certainly a lot more than just an excuse to get two heroes beating the crap out of each other – when they do, it's entirely justified in the context of the story, the action playing second fiddle to the emotional beats.

That's not to say that returning directors the Russo brothers are any slouches in the setpiece department. From the rough-and-ready, *Bourne*-ish opening salvo in Lagos to the endlessly inventive airport-based clash of *all* the superheroes (probably one of the

best action sequences ever made), *Civil War* relishes every opportunity to show you things you haven't seen before. Best of all, it does so with a sense of humour.

Special mention should also go to the two newcomers on the roster. Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther is an intriguingly enigmatic presence both in and out of costume, while Tom Holland's Spider-Man is a revelation, less mannered than Tobey Maguire, less wannabe-cool than Andrew Garfield – his Peter Parker is an ordinary, geeky teen who can't hide his inner fanboy. Both of their

upcoming solo outings now look incredibly promising. Not least because *Civil War* is brave enough to shift the trajectory of the MCU in the way *The Winter Soldier* did with its Hydra revelations – no danger of anybody resting on their laurels here. This is the sort of golden streak of quality and box office success that Pixar went on in the '00s. Maybe DC should ask Marvel to take over stewardship of the Justice League as well... **Richard Edwards**

i Jim Rash, the dean from *Community*, has a cameo as a university administrator. That can't have been a stretch...

WAR BACK-STORIES

Easter eggs and trivia

SPOLIER WARNING!



Falcon's bird-shaped drone Redwing is a nod to Sam Wilson's pet bird of prey in the comics – the pair can communicate telepathically.

Black Widow makes a reference to not knowing where AWOL Avengers Bruce Banner and Thor are. Perhaps the upcoming *Thor: Ragnarok* – in which the duo share top billing – is set in the same time frame as *Civil War*?

Vasily Karpov, the Hydra operative who carries the all-important codewords for activating the Winter Soldier, also crops up in the comics. There he's the Russian scientist who reprogrammes Bucky Barnes as the Winter Soldier.



Civil War's Sokovian chief antagonist Helmut Zemo (Daniel Brühl) appears in the comics too – he's the son of the original Baron Zemo, a Nazi scientist named Heinrich.

Ant-Man has previously scaled himself up as both Giant-Man and Goliath.

Tony Stark also built Peter Parker a spider-suit in the comics – he was known as the Iron Spider when he wore it.



Carol Kirkwood's forecast was way off.

X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

Teenage Mutant Hero Hurdles



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

12A | 143 minutes

▶ Director **Bryan Singer**

▶ Cast **James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Nicholas Hoult**

Early on in *X-Men:*

Apocalypse, a group of young mutants sneak out of Xavier's school and take in *Return Of The Jedi*. Afterwards, discussing the merits of the various *Star Wars* movies, they snark that the third movie in a trilogy usually sucks. This meta wink can be read as both a veiled dig at *X-Men: The Last Stand* and a nod towards the film they're in, but thankfully *Apocalypse* very much lives up to what has come before it. Building

on the groundwork he produced (*First Class*) and directed (*Days Of Future Past*), Bryan Singer confidently continues expanding his X-universe, producing a thrilling adventure that feels both global and intimate.

Set a decade after *Days*, it's yet another trying time in the lives of poor old Charles Xavier (James McAvoy), Erik "Magneto" Lensherr (Michael Fassbender), Mystique (Jennifer Lawrence) and co. That's the fault of ancient Egyptian mutant En Sabah Nur (Oscar Isaac), an incredibly powerful creature who ruled near the Nile until some of the enslaved masses rose up and left him entombed. Now, after millennia have passed, he's awakened, taken a look at the decade that brought

us Care Bears and shoulder pads and decided that human civilisation should be reset. Seems fair.

If there is a real weakness, it's that villain. Whereas the last film set the characters against each other in ideological terms, here there is a slightly stale scent coming off the conflict, and particularly the Big Bad – and not just because he's been skipping showers since the time of the Pharaohs. Looking for all the world like a cross between a crocodile and a novelty vibrator, this speechifying wannabe god is a clunky menace. Isaac, a talented chameleon of an actor, is buried inside his prosthetics, unable to punch much life through the latex. Fortunately, you also have Fassbender's Magneto turning his

latest family tragedy into burning rage, seemingly happy to put his lone wolf leanings aside and follow *Apocalypse*, which once again puts him at odds with our heroes.

To their credit, Singer and co-writer/producer Simon Kinberg grasp that the focus should be on the characters we know and like or want to meet, and they do a good job of indulging those already established (McAvoy brings real charm and cheekiness to Charles, while Evan Peters again steals scenes – and here has more to do – as Quicksilver) and giving the new recruits time to shine. Of the added cast, the standout is Sophie Turner as the young Jean Grey, handed a spotlight that the *Game Of Thrones* actress uses to full effect. This means that despite the less impressive threat, *Apocalypse* more than overcomes the third movie stigma, while still standing as a spectacular film in its own right. **Jim Blakey**

i The Space Port arcade is named after one Singer went to as a kid! Visit <http://bit.ly/spaceportX> to play three X-games.

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CINEMA



Michael McIntyre's act continued.

WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE

Ghibli ghost story

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 10 JUNE**

U | 103 minutes

▶ Director **Hiromasa Yonebayashi**

▶ Cast **Hailee Steinfeld, Kiernan Shipka, Grey Griffin, Geena Davis**

◉ **When Marnie Was There** may be the last film from Ghibli, the studio which made anime epics like *Spirited Away*. But it's on the other end of the scale. It's an intimate, subtle story of a solitary girl travelling to a remote coastal village, meeting a mysterious girl surrounded by mist and marsh. Ah, but is this stranger (Marnie) a real girl at all?

It's debatable whether this sometimes dreamlike, family-friendly film is really a ghost story.

The ending gives us some answers, but still leaves room for interpreting what we've seen – a bit like *The Innocents* without the menace. The slow pace reminds you of a vintage BBC drama.

But if you can take the dawdling, this is a lovely little film. When it comes to the mystery, viewers may twig early on, but that doesn't matter: at heart this is a delicate story of a girl learning that everybody hurts, but that helping a friend can help save yourself. And the dubbed version, featuring Hailee Steinfeld (*True Grit*) and Kiernan Shipka (*Mad Men*), is excellent. **Andrew Osmond**

i The film is based on a rather forgotten 1967 British children's novel by Joan Robinson, which is set in Norfolk.

TALE OF TALES

Royalty three

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 17 JUNE**

15 | 134 minutes

▶ Director **Matteo Garrone**

▶ Cast **Salma Hayek, Vincent Cassel, Toby Jones, John C Reilly**

◉ **The last thing anyone** expected from Matteo Garrone, director of gritty drama *Gomorra*, was a twisted fairytale featuring sea monsters, giant fleas and a hula-hooping bear.

Loosely based on the works of 17th century poet Giambattista Basile, this portmanteau film interweaves the fantastical stories of three kings and their respective kingdoms. In *Selvascura*, Salma Hayek's barren queen sends her husband on a mission to magically grant her a child; in *Roccaforte*, Vincent Cassel's Casanova king unwittingly courts a crone; and in *Altomonte*, Toby Jones's monarch

raises a strange pet flea, while daughter Viola (Bebe Cave) demands to be married off to a courageous suitor.

Basile was hugely influential in shaping fairytale storytelling, inspiring everyone from the Brothers Grimm to Walt Disney, but his stories still feel fresh. To say the darkly comic, often horrific twists and turns are unexpected would be a gross understatement.

It's a film that trusts its audience to go along with its loosely defined but entirely believable world. There are no title cards telling you where you are, and the rules of magic are left for you to work out. Garrone grounds the film with a deadpan tone and, with cinematographer Peter Suschitzky, captures some enchanting and sumptuous visuals.

The cast impresses. Vincent Cassel is perfect as the king who



Vera's vegetarian cafe did have one meat option.

puts his crotch first, while Toby Jones proves adept at physical comedy in a role that's half king, half clown. Cave's Viola has the most interesting journey – imagine if Cinderella found herself in a slasher movie.

If there's a problem it's that the complex, interweaving structure often interrupts the flow of a tale at just the wrong juncture,

lingering on one segment for too long or departing from another far too soon. And we have no idea who *Tale Of Tales* is for, because with gory violence, a *Python*-esque sense of the horrific and occasional nudity it's certainly not child-friendly... **Jordan Farley**

i Fancy reading the original stories? You're in luck: they were recently reprinted in a new Penguin Classics edition (RRP £12.99).



Perhaps something on page 96 has caught her eye.

ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Bobin's gone for a Burton

★★★★☆

▶ **RELEASED 27 MAY**

PG | 108 minutes

▶ Director **James Bobin**

▶ Cast **Johnny Depp, Mia Wasikowska, Helena Bonham Carter, Rhys Ifans**

☛ **Why did the Mad Hatter go mad?** What made the Red Queen fall out with the White Queen? These and other questions you probably haven't been asking are answered in this return visit to Tim Burton's "Underland", which creates a backstory for characters that didn't particularly need one.

Once Mia Wasikowska's Alice has re-entered Underland through the titular mirror, this adaptation jettisons any attempt to reflect its source, instead giving Alice a Mission Impossible: travel back in time to find out what happened to the Mad Hatter's family, the unresolved fate of which has driven him to the edge of despair.

Movies have been made on flimsier pretexts. At least this one enables incoming director James Bobin to play his trump card: Sacha Baron Cohen as Time. It's his domain Alice must penetrate to pinch the "chronosphere" that allows her to sail on the "oceans of

time". That's only the beginning of an adventure that has Alice meet juvenile incarnations of the Hatter and White Queen Mirana, and sees Helena Bonham Carter's Iracebeth endanger Underland by interacting with herself.

SBC and HBC provide the lion's share of the entertainment. Johnny Depp is muted in comparison, his Hatter spending most of the story in a despondent funk reminiscent of that Australian apology video. Perhaps that's to be expected from a subplot that reduces his demented force of nature to a sadsack with daddy issues, the result of having his taste in millinery pilloried by a disapproving father (Rhys Ifans) who perished in a Jabberwock-ignited conflagration.

Or did he? That's the mystery Bobin tries to keep us interested in over a hectic 108 minutes. The result is an always diverting fantasy that rarely stays still long enough for the viewer to pick holes. There is a hole, though – the one Burton left when he traded the director's chair for a producing role. **Neil Smith**

i Though there's no character of Time in Carroll's books, during the tea party the Hatter does talk about quarrelling with him.



One Man And His Dog: Xtreme.

WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING

Look Who's Orc-ing

★★★★☆

▶ **RELEASED 30 MAY**

12A | TBC minutes

▶ Director **Duncan Jones**

▶ Cast **Travis Fimmel, Ben Foster, Paula Patton, Toby Kebbell**

☛ **In attempting to make a** movie that both pleases gamer purists and invites in newbies, *Moon* man Duncan Jones faced an unenviable task with *Warcraft: The Beginning*. And it's one he's only partially succeeded with.

This tale of warring races – with humans seeing Orcs as invaders while the green (and grey, and sort of pink-ish) meenies are actually fleeing a dying planet – has some impressively performance-captured CG creatures, explores both cultures, and occasionally takes bold narrative chances. But those positives are often outweighed by an overwrought script and acting that ranges from nuanced to the sort of theatrical proclamations that wouldn't sound out of place in an '80s fantasy adventure. Though it's fun to channel that spirit occasionally, *Warcraft* stumbles over an uneven tone. And the need to cram in lots of world-building while leaving story threads dangling for the future is regrettable.

There's talk of portals and dark magic, loyalty, and vengeance but chances are you've heard it all before. If this is the beginning, we're not completely convinced we'll be in it to the end. **Jim Blakey**

i Uwe Boll was once told by *Warcraft* makers Blizzard they wouldn't sell the movie rights – "especially not to you."



It was their first day at the nude beach.

THESE FINAL HOURS

★★★★☆

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 87 minutes

☛ **This Aussie end-of-the-** world sees James (Nathan Phillips) leave pregnant girlfriend Zoe (Jessica De Gouw) behind to party hard before a meteor hits. En route, however, his plans change...

The core tale of personal redemption is standard stuff but Zak Hilditch's batshit-crazy thriller tears through orgies, mass suicides and murderous rampages to conclude on a scene as moving and terrifying as the climax of *Melancholia*. Hold on tight. **Jamie Graham**

ALSO+OUT



Four more movies to tell you about, three of which have yet to be entangled in our reviews net. There were no screenings for Blumhouse horror **THE DARKNESS** (out now) – that probably means it's *really good*. The spring bank holiday (30 May) sees those pizza-loving reptiles return in **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS**. Head to page 68 to read all about Ed and Lorraine Warren's latest case in **THE CONJURING 2** (17 June). Finally, we have seen **GODS OF EGYPT** (17 June), but just ran out of space! Full verdict next issue. Short version: it's god-awful.

DEADPOOL

Wade in full

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 4 JUNE (download)/
13 JUNE (Blu-ray/DVD)

2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/download

▶ Director Tim Miller

▶ Cast Ryan Reynolds, Morena Baccarin,
TJ Miller, Ed Skrein, Gina Carano

⚡ **That *Deadpool* exists as a movie at all is a minor miracle,** given that the fourth wall-breaking, rule-punching anti-superhero was long considered to be unfilmable. Still, 11 years of tortured development later, it has finally emerged as close to perfectly formed as fans of the character could have hoped. That difficult birth seems to have helped make the film what it is, as director Tim Miller, writers Paul Wernick and Rhett Reese, and star/producer Ryan Reynolds honed the concept, polished the script and coerced their way to a version of *Deadpool* that doesn't skimp on his filthier, funnier side.

Miller, making his directing debut after toiling away in the effects and performance-capture world, has an eye for visual flair but keeps things from turning into an empty spectacle, while stretching the limited budget to an outrageous degree.

Meanwhile, the character of cocky, cancer-ridden assassin Wade Wilson and the mutant he becomes fits Reynolds almost as

perfectly as his suit, and the quip-to-punch ratio is high. We'd already seen a watered-down Wade Wilson in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, but this movie wipes the slate clean and, when not mocking that wasted attempt, reminds the world that *Deadpool* can actually work when you embrace the man and his madness. Even the meta-referencing of comic book tropes and his own presence in a film succeeds for the most part; when *Deadpool*'s quipping about whether James McAvoy or Patrick Stewart is playing Professor X or remarking that the studio couldn't afford more than two *X-Men* characters, it all feels of a piece instead of pulling you out of the plot.

Surrounding Reynolds is a well-chosen cast, including *Firefly*'s Morena Baccarin as Wade's flame Vanessa, who proves more than a match for our hero; Ed Skrein as Ajax, a desensitised villain with an evil agenda; and Gina Carano as Angel Dust, a mute brute with the sort of strength that can even overcome towering X-hero Colossus. Plus, for added comic relief, we have Weasel, played by TJ Miller, finally used to full comic effect in a live-action film (yes, we're looking at you, *Transformers: Age Of Extinction*). Then there's Brianna Hildebrand, whose Negasonic Teenage



Deadpool: highly protective of his car parking space.



"Hey everybody, we're in SFX!"

Warhead doesn't get much to do, but still manages to break out of the usual moody sidekick schtick.

The story is helpfully kept to a manageable tale of vengeance instead of the usual overblown world-in-peril stakes, which allows us to focus on Wade and his charismatic behaviour, which is less morally dubious and more setting a book about ethics on fire and then peeing on it to douse the flames. Yes, this movie is juvenile, puerile, bodily function-obsessed and bloody, and it definitely won't appeal to everyone, but it's *Deadpool*; defiantly different

“ Finds something new to say in the superhero arena ”

while managing to find something new to say in the crowded superhero arena, and faithfully portraying its main character without the results feeling totally ridiculous on-screen.



MIND
PROBE

ED SKREIN

Ajax in *Deadpool*



Why did you want to be part of this movie?

→ I was a big comic book fan when I was a kid. I still collect graphic novels. Deadpool is a character I'd always thought was cool as fuck, a dynamic character. I was a fan of this before the movie, I would have been a fan of this even if I wasn't in the movie, and I'm still a huge fan of it, maybe even more so because of my involvement.

How physically demanding did you find the shoot?

→ I have two huge fights in it, two fights I'm extremely proud of. One of them involves a lot of fire and the other was a long fight, a very technical fight, with wires and gimbals and lots of crazy stuff. They're very different in their dynamic, the two fights. The hard work was all in the training, so when it came to shooting we had a great time – we had so much fun. I enjoyed the stuntwork on this movie more than any stuntwork I've ever done.

So you've played a supervillain – is there a superhero you'd like to play?

→ There's a character called King Mob in *The Invisibles*, a Grant Morrison character. I love King Mob. He's an incredible character. But I've always wanted to play Panthro in *ThunderCats*...

Nick Setchfield

• **Extras** One commentary features Reynolds and the writers, while the other has director Miller and Deadpool co-creator Rob Liefeld in a slightly more back-slapping but still information-rich track that, thanks to Liefeld, boasts some meaty Marvel insight. Making Of "From Comics To Screen... To Screen" runs for an hour and 20 minutes, and examines the film in forensic detail, covering everything from the character's comic book origins to the effects work. It's satisfyingly warts-and-all, perhaps only skipping over any tension with Fox

about whether the movie should be made at all.

Nearly 20 minutes of deleted/extended scenes (with optional Tim Miller commentary) run the gamut from tiny slices taken out (mostly more of Deadpool insulting or hurting people) to whole sequences such as "Cancer World Tour" that you'll wish they'd included. Then there's the gag reel, which showcases improv master TJ Miller's nigh-on supernatural ability to come up with alternate lines, "Deadpool's Fun Sack", which includes all the trailers and fun viral marketing that dominated

the internet before the film arrived, and character biographies and artwork galleries (which include some pre-visualisation videos).

If there's one thing missing – and it's probably for legal reasons – it's the test footage that helped get the film made after the project got stuck in limbo at the studio, but there is at least a glimpse of it, and some discussion, during the Making Of. Buy the DVD, incidentally, and you only get the gag reel and the "Fun Sack". **James White**

i The sex montage was apparently the toughest scene to write and shoot, going through 76 versions before all were happy.

GETTY (3)

"One day we should just turn the lights on."

DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- Someone mentions alien DNA, chem trails or Roswell.
- Mulder and Scully have a discussion about the son they gave away, William.
- Scully conducts an autopsy.
- Someone mentions "back in the day" or being "old-school".
- Agent Einstein looks at Mulder like she's measuring him for a strait-jacket.
- Our heroes break out the really, really powerful torches again. Hurray!
- Finish the bottle when Mulder does the Batusi.

THE X-FILES

Season Ten

We wanted to believe

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 13 JUNE**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Creator **Chris Carter**

▶ Cast **David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Mitch Pileggi, William B. Davis, Lauren Ambrose, Robbie Amell**

There's an inevitability to 2016's *X-Files* revival. The cultural nostalgia machine has relentlessly cycled its way to the '90s: BBC Four celebrates Britpop, while Hollywood mines the pre-millennial appeal of *Independence Day* and *Jurassic Park*. What better time to return Chris Carter's Fortean Feds to active duty?

The title sequence alone tries to persuade us that two decades of dust hasn't settled on our Gillian Anderson *FHMs*. It's the classic

set of visuals that launched the show in 1993, those monochrome FBI mug-shots freezing its stars in their iconic youth. Cutely retro or creatively lazy? It's certainly a statement, one that places the platonic ideal of *The X-Files* squarely against the 21st century.

And it's a subtly different world the show's operating in now. Post-9/11, conspiracy's an everyday lexicon: Snowden, false flags, Wikileaks. The Truthers are out there. We're all Fox Mulder now. Except Fox Mulder, it seems. Opener "My Struggle" – a wordy, stilted comeback, cursed by Carter's trademark Death By Exposition – sees him toss away a lifetime's belief system, a change of heart so fast, so profound and so unbelievable it threatens the

credibility of this entire revival.

These six episodes synthesise everything we loved and hated about *The X-Files*. Yes, "Mulder And Scully Meet The Were-Monster" is a joy, a reminder that the show soared when it smirked, but "Babylon" is a tonal disaster zone, queasily smashing together Islam, suicide bombers and broad comedy. "Founder's Mutation" is eerie and unsettling, but "Home Again" feels like default *X-Files*, for all that it engages with an intriguingly contemporary idea like a thought-form predator.

Anderson's terrific – fully engaged, fighting to make the best of weak material. Duchovny, always detached, now seems to be in orbit, resurrecting Mulder as a *Saturday Night Live* sketch.

Closer "My Struggle II" sees the whole thing collapse into talky conspiracy gubbins, aiming for epic but hitting muddled. That's true, at least, to the ultimately frustrating spirit of the show's original run, but it's not the kind of nostalgia you need.

▶ **Extras** There are commentaries on episodes two, three and six, including contributions from Carter, Duchovny, Anderson and writer/director James Wong. The 13-part "Season X" (80 minutes) covers every aspect of the series, while "43:45" (51 minutes) does the same for episode one; both are well worth watching. You also get one deleted scene; one extended scene (more Duchovny dancing...); a ten-minute look at the old series' cryptozoological critters; "Grace", a post-apocalyptic short by the show's script coordinator; a brief piece on how eco-friendly the production was; and a gag reel.

Nick Setchfield

The police sketches of the Were-Monster in episode three were drawn by Gillian Anderson's daughter, Piper.



Barrowman had once again exposed his buttocks.

GOOSEBUMPS

Black magic

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED 30 MAY
 2015 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD
 Director Rob Letterman
 Cast Jack Black, Dylan Minnette, Ryan Lee, Odeya Rush

◆ **Stephen King for the torch-** beneath-the-blankets demographic, RL Stine's *Goosebumps* books were always a big-screen brand in waiting. Tim Burton planned a movie in 1998 but dithered over which of Stine's kid-friendly spine-shiverers to adapt. Luckily modern science has found a solution. Simply pour all 182 books into the blender and whip that undead legion of ghouls and monsters into a postmodern purée.

In a meta move, Jack Black is RL Stine himself, self-exiled to a small town in Delaware. Toadlike and cranky, bristling at comparisons with arch rival King,

he sees his literary creations lurch and slither into the real world: evil garden gnomes, demonic poodles and even a giant praying mantis.

Lit by an '80s Amblin glow, powered by a sharp screenplay and great leads, this is a smart and charming ghost train ride – and a stealth celebration of the sorcerous art of writing.

◆ **Extras** The DVD has two kid-friendly featurettes (nine minutes): one on how to defeat the movie's monsters; one a gag about the set being haunted. The Blu-ray adds two more (13 minutes) – a behind-the-scenes bit on evil dummy Slappy, and a piece on making your own horror effects – plus deleted and alternate scenes, a gag reel and screen tests (26 minutes). **Nick Setchfield**

i The real RL Stine isn't a fan of the movie's Stephen King gags: "They're just not like me," he says.

DOOMWATCH

Dull watch

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED 20 JUNE
 1972 | 12 | Blu-ray
 Director Peter Sasdy
 Cast Ian Bannen, Judy Geeson, John Paul, Simon Oates, Jean Trend

BLU-RAY DEBUT It's been quite the annus mirabilis for fans of *Doomwatch*, the prescient '70s TV series about a government department investigating ecological disasters. Swift on the heels of April's box set release of every

“The pacing is mercilessly, punishingly slow”

surviving episode, here's a belated HD release for the movie spin-off made by British studio Tigon.

Ian Bannen plays a scientist sent to a remote island to investigate the possible effects of pollution on marine life. Instead he discovers a disturbing epidemic, which is deforming the residents of Balfé and leaving them prone to violence.

Early on the signs are quite promising, with the island setting, the uncooperative locals (who believe the sickness is “the will of the Almighty”), the dogged Scottish lead, his relationship with a young female teacher, and a soundtrack featuring pastoral flutes all coming together to create a strong *Wicker Man* vibe. However, the film becomes increasingly frustrating.

For one thing, for fans of the series it's pretty galling to see the TV cast sidelined in favour of

Karl always overdressed in the summer.



Bannen's Johnny-come-lately interloper; for the most part they're left in London peering at slides of plankton, only occasionally loosed from the lab.

But the far bigger problem is the pacing, which is mercilessly, punishingly slow. The TV series often struggled to create enough incident to sustain your interest. Here that problem is amplified,

with every dreary, plodding detail of the investigation played out in front of us to pad the running time – not only well beyond the point where it becomes blindingly obvious what's going on, but past the point where you cease to care.

◆ **Extras** None. **Ian Berriman**

i Fancy visiting the main location? The island of Balfé is actually Cornish village Polkerris, four miles from the Eden Project.

HOUDINI & DOYLE Series One

Victorian X-Files with celebrity sleuths

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | DVD

▶ Creators David Hoselton, David Titcher

▶ Cast Stephen Mangan, Michael

Weston, Rebecca Liddiard

History may well be written by the victors, but it's happily rewritten by TV scriptwriters. Over 10 episodes, *Houdini & Doyle* contains maybe one historical accuracy – the first paperback edition of *Dracula* was published in 1901 – and whoever let that slip through was probably fired.

The show shamelessly mashes fact into a pulpy mess, starting with its very premise. Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and escapist Harry Houdini did meet in real life and form an acquaintance based on a shared interest in mediums (with

Doyle the believer, Houdini the debunker). However, they didn't meet until 20 years after the 1901 setting of this ITV series, and they certainly didn't become a supernatural crime-busting duo for Scotland Yard. Add in Doyle growing up in London rather than Scotland, London's first female police officer appearing years before she should have and terms like "spaceship" bandied about, and you've got a show that appears to exist in a parallel universe.

Which would be fine if it had the decency to come across like a "fanciful yarn", but only two episodes come anywhere near the kind of Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* vibe the show desperately needs: one dealing with Spring-heeled Jack, the other with vampires. In most of the other episodes, the show's like some

bland *Silent Witness* with handlebar moustaches. Even a promising story about "aliens" in the countryside ends up more like *Midsomer Murders*. The "supernatural" occurrences lead to banal procedurals with often silly denouements (underground trains causing ghostly-looking gassy emissions). A couple of episodes are simply immensely dull.

It's a shame that the dour tone battles with the wanton disregard for history, as the central characters – Doyle (Stephen Mangan), Houdini (Michael Weston) and that fictional first policewoman, Adelaide Stratton (Rebecca Liddiard) – actually form a very likeable and watchable trio.

“It looks like a show rushed into production”

Sure, Mangan doesn't have a terrific range, but he gets away with it under the cover of Doyle's British reserve to give the guy a gruff charm. Weston is excellent as the mouthy Houdini, fighting his own demons, while Liddiard is delightfully feisty as the anachronistic Stratton.

Elsewhere, stylish production design is badly served by flat lighting, while the score could politely be described as avant garde... or, less politely, as farting elephants dancing to hurdy-gurdy music. Whatever it is, it grates.

Houdini & Doyle looks like a show rushed into production before anyone had worked out what it was supposed to be. And once they started working on it it seems nobody could agree either.

▶ **Extras** None. **Dave Golder**

▶ Kids' show *Mentors* brought Conan Doyle to the present in 2000, played by *The X-Files*' William B Davis.



Mavis reacted badly to Sunny Delight.

THE LEECH WOMAN

Shoulda stuck to Oil of Olay

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1960 | 12 | DVD

▶ Director Edward Dein

▶ Cast Grant Williams, Coleen Gray,

Phillip Terry, Gloria Talbott

This enjoyably deranged B-movie is powered by a queasy trinity of old-fashioned sexism, ageism and racism.

Coleen Gray plays June, embittered wife of a scientist seeking a way to delay ageing. After acquiring a secret powder that's just the tonic, he heads off to Africa in search of the source, dragging his wrinkled spouse along to act as a guinea pig. This doesn't end well as June becomes a sort of vampiric cougar, reliant on pinching pineal hormones to maintain her newly youthful looks.

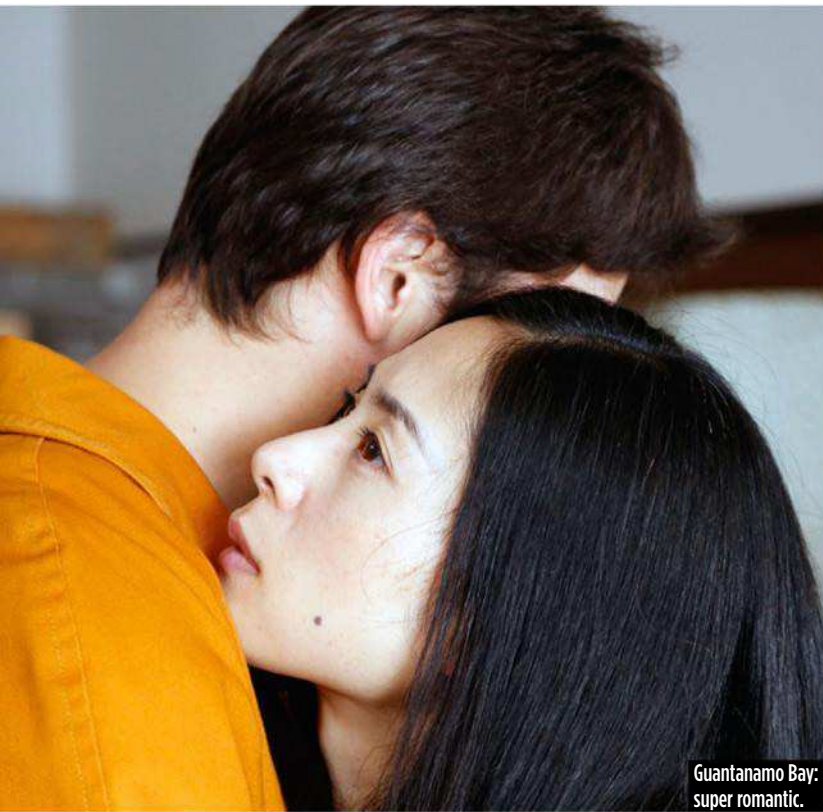
With its spear-waving savages and lines like "Old women always give me the creeps!" it's a film liable to make modern-day audiences cringe – though as the script clearly disapproves of the husband who views his wife purely in terms of her ornamental value, you could argue it makes a feminist point.

But what really sticks in the memory isn't that, or the terrible old-age make-up, or even the murders. It's the name of the African tribe, the Nandos, which repeatedly results in people discussing "the secret of the Nandos", as if trying to crack the recipe for the chicken chain's Peri-Peri sauce...

▶ **Extras** Trailer. **Ian Berriman**

▶ June pinches pineal hormones by stabbing people in the neck. But the pineal gland is deep in the brain!





Guantanamo Bay: super romantic.

JOURNEY TO THE SHORE

Love And Death

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD (dual format)

▶ Director Kiyoshi Kurosawa

▶ Cast Eri Fukatsu, Tadanobu Asano

⚙️ Though director Kiyoshi

Kurosawa is best known for his work in the horror genre – such as 2001's *Kairo* – this Japanese drama is a very different kind of ghost story. Gently romantic, it's a film with moments of quiet stillness, philosophical dialogue, and a hint of saccharine sweetness.

Three years ago, Mizuki's husband Yusuke went missing – turns out he committed suicide by drowning. Now he suddenly reappears, looking just as he did in life. You'd expect Mizuki to scream

her head off, but instead she reacts with calm acceptance, remaining as buttoned-up as her sensible cardigans. The way the film presents its fantastical events is just as understated.

It becomes a sort of paranormal road trip, as the couple visit places Yusuke stayed on his long journey home. Everywhere they go they seem to inspire confessions, as people unburden themselves of their feelings about dead loved ones. The message is rather obvious – leave nothing unsaid, as you might regret it later – but mildly affecting all the same.

⚙️ **Extras** Trailer. **Ian Berriman**

i For another tale of a loved one mysteriously returning from the grave, try 1972's *Neither The Sea Nor The Sand*.



Paper jams always gave Jan a nosebleed.

DARK SIGNAL

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 30 MAY**

2016 | 18 | DVD/download

⚙️ **Torchwood's Gareth**

David-Lloyd returns to Welsh weirdness in this lo-fi horror set against the bleak backdrop of Snowdonia. There's a serial killer shearing wedding fingers, the restless spirit of a dead girl and a night radio slot featuring "North Wales' finest psychic".

The rugged, brooding countryside is evocatively shot and Siwan Morris is a stand-out as a cynical DJ. But the scattered plot threads never quite cohere and the intriguing premise crumbles into run-of-the-mill slasher nastiness.

⚙️ **Extras** None. **Nick Setchfield**



Is there a cartoon mirror on this page?

GHOST IN THE SHELL

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

⚙️ **This version of the** cyberpunk anime is subtitled *The New Movie*, but it's no reboot for newbies. Instead it continues current series *Arise*, with rebooted versions of the cyborg heroes.

There's a good last battle, but generally it's below-par *GITS*, with decent character development and ideas nearly buried under a ridiculously convoluted story.

⚙️ **Extras** The DVD has none; the Blu-ray has three short featurettes. **Andrew Osmond**



Under the mask Jeremy Kyle was worse.

THE SUCKLING

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1990 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

⚙️ **"Guy comes here to get his** penis sucked; it gets shot off instead." So goes this scuzzy, cheap horror set in a Brooklyn brothel. A young woman has an abortion there which is flushed down the toilet; toxic waste turns it into a monstrosity.

It's not Merchant Ivory then. But nor does it effectively mimic a Frank "Basket Case" Henenlotter vibe, being neither as funny nor consistently wacky as it should be – it turns into a dull monster siege movie with vague similarities to *Alien*.

⚙️ **Extras** Producer interview.

Russell Lewin



Sue was rubbish at trimming her nails.

CHERRY TREE

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 18 | DVD

⚙️ **Centipede sex! Well, sex** while giant centipedes crawl about, burrowing into human flesh... that's the Cronenbergian highlight of this Irish horror from the team behind Hammer's *Wake Wood*.

Following a schoolgirl blackmailed into a satanic pregnancy by a witch, it boasts some original imagery, mixing said creepy-crawlies with blood and bowls of cherries. But it gets sillier and sillier, while some storytelling by montage and voiceover makes you wonder if they ran out of cash.

⚙️ **Extras** None. **Ian Berriman**

HOME ENTERTAINMENT



His Match.com profile wasn't popular.

IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE

Ripped off for Ripley?

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 30 MAY**

1958 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Edward L. Cahn

▶ Cast Marshall Thompson, Shirley Patterson, Kim Spalding, Ann Doran

“The movie that inspired *Alien*!” – or so the internet would have you believe. Tommyrot. True, *It!* shares certain elements with Ridley Scott’s classic: a monster that sneaks about in the ventilation system picking off a spaceship’s crew one by one; an open-the-airlock ending. But *Alien*’s Ron Shusett and Dan O’Bannon denied having seen it. And *It!* was following a template, anyway – screenwriter Jerome Bixby, later of *Trek*, admitted to taking his lead from *The Thing From Another World*.

Setting all that aside, what we have here is a thinly-characterised ‘50s B-movie, flatly directed and featuring unremarkable performances. Yet it remains a better-than-average example of its type. With its mighty snout, over-sized feet and lumbering gait, the titular Martian menace is absurd, but still memorable. There’s a decent degree of tension. And numerous details – the crew’s incessant smoking, the half-hearted romantic subplot, the alarmingly casual use of hand grenades on a rocketship – are liable to inspire affectionate chuckles.

▶ **Extras** None. **Ian Berriman**

The monster costume was recycled by director Edward L. Cahn in one of his later features – 1959’s *Invisible Invaders*.



The threesome was going all sorts of wrong.

THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES Season One

Pretty Vacant

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 6 JUNE**

2015-2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Creators Alfred Gough, Miles Millar

▶ Cast Austin Butler, Poppy Drayton, Ivana Baquero, Manu Bennett

What a pretty little show this is. Its makers obviously decided to make it look as attractive as they possibly can to enchant its young MTV audience, and so every member of the main cast is as cute as a button – their perfect hair, wide eyes and pouty lips are almost supernaturally gorgeous. The costumes are beautiful. And as for the scenery – well, there’s a reason this series is shot in New Zealand. Mountains, trees, rivers, more trees... Middle-earth was hardly ugly, and neither is this.

So, yes, *The Shannara Chronicles* is nice to look at. But is it any good? Nope.

Based (very) loosely on Terry Brooks’s saga *The Elfstones Of Shannara*, it rips off Tolkien to an almost embarrassing extent, only with a Californian surfer dude as

its hero instead of a Hobbit. Austin Butler’s half-elf Will becomes embroiled in a quest to save the Earth, alongside the never-knowingly uncorseted elf Amberle (Poppy Drayton) and “bad girl with a heart of gold” human Eretria (Ivana Baquero). This quest involves human/elf fighting, elf/elf fighting, gnome/elf fighting, trolls fighting anyone, and a horde of demons who didn’t make the cut for Peter Jackson’s films.

Not only have you seen all this before, you can practically talk along with it. The only twist is that *Shannara* is a post-apocalyptic world, so there are glimpses of things such as the Golden Gate Bridge to live things up.

However, despite all the downsides, if you want nothing more from your TV-viewing than eye candy, familiarity and the odd amusing quip, chances are you’ll love it. It is pretty, after all.

▶ **Extras** None. **Jayne Nelson**

In the worst/best moment, some human farmers screen *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and boo Spock’s elf-like ears.



“Please get us some chairs!”

JUSTICE LEAGUE VS TEEN TITANS

Teenage Kicks

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 30 MAY**

2016 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Sam Liu

▶ Cast Stuart Allan, Taissa Farmiga, Jon Bernthal, Rosario Dawson

More doesn’t always equal better. The DC Universe Animated movies have stepped up their frequency in the last few years, but the quality has become much more variable – as this latest release proves.

Part of the shared New 52-style universe, the film’s title pitches it as a battle royale showdown between the Justice League and the Teen Titans, when it’s largely a Titans story with the League crowbarred in wherever possible.

As disobedient new Robin Damian Wayne is sent to the Titans to learn the importance of teamwork, there are the expected violent clashes, before the dark past of a fellow Titan forces them to work together. The clunky story does pull off some likeable character moments, and there are a few eye-catching animation sequences, but the messy, overcrowded story struggles to maintain focus, ultimately leaving this both incoherent and underwhelming.

▶ **Extras** The DVD edition just has a preview of the next in the series. The Blu-ray adds inconsequential featurettes on the Titans, Raven and classic villain Trigon, alongside two Titans-starring animated TV episodes. **Saxon Bullock**

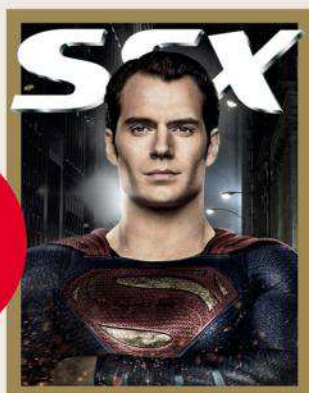
Next up: an animated movie of 1988 Batman graphic novel *The Killing Joke*, with Mark Hamill voicing the Joker.

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HOME ENTERTAINMENT



THE 5TH WAVE

The 6th is boredom

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED OUT NOW!
 2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/download
 Director J Blakeson
 Cast Chloë Grace Moretz, Liev Schreiber, Nick Robinson, Maggie Siff

There's a scene early on in this YA adaptation where Cassie (Chloë Grace Moretz) shoots an innocent man. Even in a post-*Hunger Games* world it's a startling opening. Unfortunately, it's downhill from there.

A spaceship appears above Ohio, heralding the arrival of a race of aliens who proceed to devastate the planet with five waves of attack (EMP, tsunami, plague, alien soldiers and... well, that would be telling). Cassie must find her brother (Zackary Arthur), unaware that he's been co-opted into an ET-hunting military unit.

The frustrating thing about the

film is that it's *almost* good. It's character-led, with a subtext about brutalising children. But there's no tension. Humanity has been wiped out in the first 15 minutes and you feel nothing. Cassie herself is sidelined the moment that love interest Evan (Alex Roe) shows up. And in setting up a potential trilogy it doesn't so much end as stop.

Extras Commentary with the director and Moretz; "Inside The 5th Wave" is a generic Making Of; "Training Squad 53" and "Survival Guide" showcase the young cast; the unexpectedly adorable "Sammy On Set" follows Zackary Arthur as he interviews members of the crew. You also get 25 minutes of deleted scenes and a gag reel. **Will Salmon**

The concluding third book of Rick Yancey's 5th Wave series - *The Last Star* - has just been released by Penguin.

PENDA'S FEN

England's Dreaming

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★
RELEASED OUT NOW!
 1974 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD
 Director Alan Clarke
 Cast Spencer Banks, John Atkinson, Georgine Anderson, Ron Smerczak

Broadcast in the BBC's regular *Play For Today* slot, *Penda's Fen* is something of an outlier on the CV of Alan Clarke, the working class maverick best known for such ruggedly masculine fare as borstal tale *Scum* and football hooligan drama *The Firm*. Centred on a specky public school boy, it's a

rural rather than urban piece, and discusses high-flown subjects such as Manichean philosophy at considerable length. At no point does anyone start swinging a pool ball in a sock.

Spencer Banks plays the teenage Stephen, who begins the piece with a seemingly unshakeable belief in the dominance of the English establishment, self-righteously railing against deviants and subversives, but who gradually goes through a spiritual and sexual awakening. This involves visions of angels, demons and King Penda (last pagan ruler of Britain), as well as conversations with his favourite composer, the late Edward Elgar.

Just the sort of obdurately intellectual drama that the BBC no longer tends to make, at times *Penda's Fen* can be frustratingly opaque (Clarke himself apparently confessed that he didn't fully

This new church had an odd way of doing communion.



understand it). But in the brief moments when it takes flight into fantasy it weds poetic dialogue to some memorable imagery: middle-class families calmly queuing up to have their hands chopped off; a gargoyles-like demon squatting on Stephen's chest as he lies in bed; the boy going up in flames after someone torches a Polaroid. And for fans of

Clarke, one of British television's greatest directors, it's interesting to see him tackling a very different kind of youthful rebellion.

Extras Mini documentary *The Landscape Of Feelings* interviews writer David Rudkin, among others; a booklet. **Ian Berriman**

Spencer Banks also starred in ITV's 1970-1971 children's series *Timeslip*, which is getting a DVD reissue on 27 June.

“Can be frustratingly opaque at times”



Eyes: may be bigger than actual size.

ALDNOAH.ZERO

Season One

We are the Martians

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 30 MAY**

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Ei Aoki

▶ Cast Natsuki Hanae, Sora Aramiya, Kensho Ono, Ai Kayano

◆ **SF anime has a tradition of** depicting wars between Earth and humans who've gone to space, rooted in 1979's *Gundam*, but *Aldnoah.Zero* is an interesting tweak on the idea.

It's set in an alternative present where the discovery of alien tech allowed some people to build an empire on Mars; the show starts with an attack on Earth. In effect, it's a *War Of The Worlds* remake where the machines are piloted by other humans who consider themselves a new species.

The Earthlings, though, have giant robot suits themselves. We follow a team fighting back, led by an unnaturally calm teenage boy. The more romantic hero is a boy on the Martian side, obsessed with a lovely princess. Such character contrasts, as well as attractive visuals and some very energetic early episodes, lift the show above most action-SF anime. Later episodes are more generic and sometimes disappointing (not to say silly), but overall *Aldnoah.Zero* is decently exciting and engaging.

◆ **Extras** Clean opening and closing titles; a preview featurette. The Collector's Edition Blu-ray comes with a 72-page booklet full of design images. **Andrew Osmond**

At the end of part three, there's a rather important scene after the closing credits, so don't miss it!



Fred the barber had awfully chilly hands.

BLOOD BATH

Varied vampire versions

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 30 MAY**

1966 | 15 | Blu-ray

▶ Directors Rados Novakovic, Jack Hill, Stephanie Rothman

▶ Cast William Campbell, Anna Pavane, Patrick Magee, Kerry Anderson, Sid Haig

◆ **Are you sitting comfortably?** Then we'll begin. Because *Blood Bath* has possibly the most complex history of any film – ever!

Back in 1963, Yugoslavian crime drama *Operacija Ticijan* (*Operation Titian*) was produced by Roger Corman. This dubbed black and white film concerns a gangster (Patrick Magee) who clashes with a disturbed artist (William Campbell). Unsatisfied, Corman had it re-edited into *Portrait In Terror*, which cuts out the beginning but adds other bits.

In 1966 Corman got director Jack Hill to take around 10 minutes of footage from *Portrait In Terror* and shoot a new story in California around it, with added beatniks and horror. Then director Stephanie Rothman came in and shot more new footage, adding a vampire to the mix! This was *Blood Bath*. Then a further 17 minutes of footage – some new,

some from the original Yugoslavian film – was added and it was sold to TV as *Track Of The Vampire*. Phew! So... is it a good movie? Not particularly.

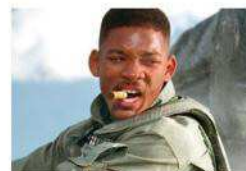
This package features all four versions. Watching either *Blood Bath* or *Track* – the vampire ones – is like getting drunk without touching a drop. Some parts are shot with style and are heavy with atmosphere, and there's an imaginative climax, but it's totally incoherent – an insane mishmash – and horrendously padded with, for example, a silent eight-minute chase and an utterly pointless four-minute dance on a beach. Your brain will fry.

◆ **Extras** The best watch is the 82-minute featurette in which *Video Watchdog* editor Tim Lucas explains the crazy evolution of these movies – it's immensely detailed and absolutely fascinating. You also get a five-minute interview with actor Sid Haig, a four-minute one with Jack Hill, and a gallery. A 40-page booklet and poster complete the package.

Russell Lewin

Francis Ford Coppola was a story editor on *Blood Bath*, while future *Star Wars* producer Gary Kurtz was a sound technician.

(ROUND UP)



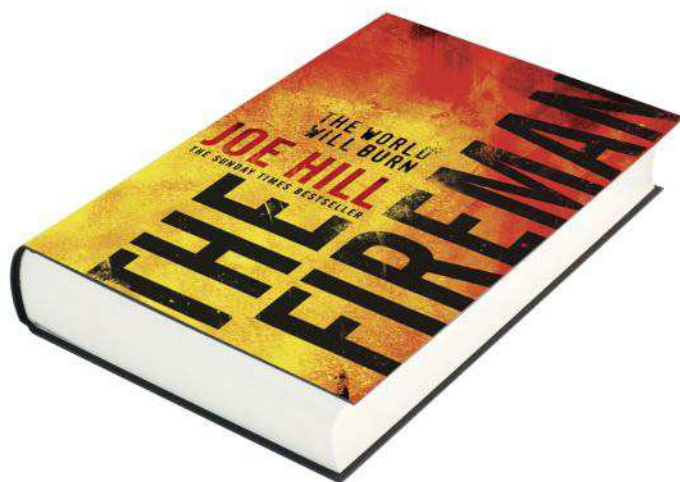
Warm up for the imminent release of *Independence Day: Resurgence* with the **INDEPENDENCE DAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION** (30 May, Blu-ray/DVD).

The DVD has a new restoration of the theatrical cut; the Blu-ray adds new half-hour documentary *Independence Day: A Legacy Surging Forward* and a spruced-up extended cut – running about eight minutes longer, that features five extra scenes, plus another 10 with additional/alternate footage. Take your mind off one kind of Trump by enjoying another, with Norwegian kids' comedy **DOCTOR PROCTOR'S FART POWDER** (out now, DVD).

In this Roald Dahl-like fantasy, two children befriend an eccentric professor whose latest invention allows them to guff themselves airborne. This attracts the attention of an evil tycoon... We said: "A pleasantly breezy diversion, grotesque enough in places to recall Jean-Pierre Jeunet."

Streaming on Netflix now are all 12 episodes of so-so animated series **KONG: KING OF THE APES**. Set in 2050, it pits the giant gorilla against a villainous cyborg's robotic dinosaurs. If you want your kids to become environmentally aware then plonk them in front of it, as endangered species and the destruction of the rainforest are key themes. More excitingly, this Kong has a flippin' jet-pack!

Finally, there are further box set releases for a trio of US series: **THE LEFTOVERS** SEASON TWO (20 June, DVD), **THE LIBRARIANS** SEASON TWO (out now, DVD) and **ONCE UPON A TIME** SEASON FOUR (out now, Blu-ray/DVD).



THE FIREMAN

Blaze of gory



► **RELEASED 7 JUNE**

608 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Joe Hill

► Publisher Gollancz

❖ **The end of the world as we know it may, as Michael Stipe contended, start “with an earthquake”, “birds and snakes, an aeroplane” may be involved, and the spirit of the late Lenny Bruce may face events without being afraid. Nevertheless, one of the contentions in REM’s finest pre-stadium-era song has always seemed like an idle boast: does Stipe really think he’ll “feel fine”?**

A vast array of art and fiction argues otherwise, suggests that the end of the world will, in fact, be magnitudes worse than the greyest Sunday. It’s a view that reached an apotheosis in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, a journey through the cannibal-infested aftermath of an extinction event. What could be fine about such a scenario?

Enter Joe Hill, whose *The Fireman* is, as he lately told *SFX*, “an apocalypse story for people who are sick of apocalypse stories”. Rather than magnify the misery, Hill instead offers us the perspective of characters who take

the upbeat decision to endure after becoming infected by “Dragonscale” – a spore that looks like a gorgeous tattoo on the skin (cool) but which makes victims liable to combust (not cool, literally). America crashes and burns; it’s a hopeless situation.

Except pregnant nurse Harper Grayson refuses to give in to hopelessness, at least until she’s given birth. Instead, employing optimism borrowed in part from Mary Poppins, she looks for spoonfuls of sugar (a commodity in increasingly short supply) to help the medicine (even harder to source) go down. Similarly upbeat is Brit émigré John Rockwood, who dresses (hence the title) as a fireman and who’s learnt to turn his condition to his own ends. Both become residents of a makeshift commune, Camp

“Hill’s most ambitious book yet, brave and bold”

Wyndham, a cosy spot to survive a catastrophe provided that the neighbours, healthy people with an unhealthy interest in killing the Dragonscale-infected, don’t find it. As Hill has also noted, this is a book where the heroes are the zombies, while those hunting them show “genocidal urges”.

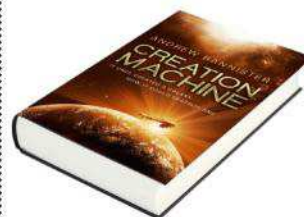
Clever – but *The Fireman* isn’t just clever, it’s also a book with real soul. That’s perhaps because, for all that it’s a visceral horror novel, in key respects it reads like the first volume of a family saga, with Harper cast as a mother figure to youngsters at Camp Wyndham. As for *The Fireman*, he’s less patriarch, more favourite uncle – the kind who mysteriously goes to Buenos Aires for six months only to turn up uninvited at Christmas smelling of whisky.

If only the rest of the residents of Camp Wyndham were as much fun. They’re a dysfunctional lot, and gradually the situation deteriorates thanks partly to a (family-centred) power struggle – and the deterioration is gradual, because at 600-plus pages this is a long novel. Perhaps too long: scenes at Wyndham could arguably have been cut, especially as they’re ultimately a prelude to a journey across a ravaged landscape of a kind familiar to anyone who’s seen just a bit of *The Walking Dead*.

But cutting scenes would also risk losing much of what makes *The Fireman* special. The sheer human she-did-this-but-he-said-that-but-it-was-still-her-fault messiness of the relationships at Wyndham, especially when contrasted with the clinical chilliness of Harper’s broken marriage, don’t make for brevity.

And why should they? The deeper truths of *The Fireman* lie in the way it explores how we slowly build connections with those closest to us. It does this, moreover, while still acknowledging how families turn in on themselves, become destructive. It’s Hill’s most ambitious book yet, a brave, bold and big-hearted take on the end of the world that, yes, may just make you believe it could all feel fine. **Jonathan Wright**

i The audiobook of *The Fireman* is read by Kate Mulgrew. Listen to some excerpts on Soundcloud: <http://bit.ly/firemanaudio>.



CREATION MACHINE

Behind the Spin



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

328 pages | Hardback/paperback/ebook

► Author Andrew Bannister

► Publisher Bantam Press

❖ **From Larry Niven’s**

Ringworld to the immense ships and habitats of Iain M Banks’s *Culture* novels, science fiction has often been a genre for thinking big. Debut novelist Andrew Bannister certainly isn’t afraid to aim high, and he’s delivered an inventive example of large-scale SF in the multi-layered *Creation Machine*.

The story is set inside an artificially constructed miniature galaxy, the Spin. While ex-soldier Fleare Haas escapes imprisonment and aims to get revenge on her politician father, elsewhere the corrupt and dangerous Alameche has discovered one of the powerful ancient devices that actually built the Spin...

Balancing bursts of action with expansive world-building, immersive prose and sharp dialogue, Bannister has made a colourful debut that conjures up the same kind of gnarly, lurid weirdness that made Banks’s SF epics so memorable. The narrative isn’t quite so strong, however – the book’s final third introduces new concepts that result in the plot losing focus. But despite some flaws in the storytelling, this is still a distinctive novel that hints at good things to come from this author. **Saxon Bullock**

i Andrew Bannister’s day job is in construction – he’s an expert in green transport and corporate sustainability.



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO STAR WARS

A bit Forced



► **RELEASED 2 JUNE**

217 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Cass R Sunstein

► Publisher Dey Street Books

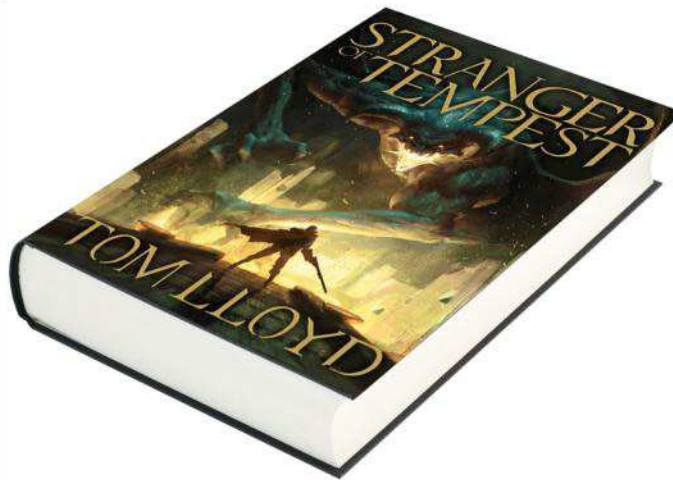
❖ **Rumour has it that *Star Wars: A New Hope* was terrible on the first draft. Unfortunately for fans, this academic exploration of what makes the series special feels very much still in the first draft phase.**

Essentially a series of essays exploring topics as varied as the politics of rebellion, what social media can tell us about the franchise's success, and the significance of choice vs destiny, there's potential here. Sadly, it's smothered by bad writing.

Clunky sentences, repetitive examples and cringey interjections tarnish every chapter. A straight exploration of the topics covered could be compelling, but Cass Sunstein is too intent on telling us how "terrific" Taylor Swift is to stay on target. The tone feels off, with several jokes failing to land. And any book dismissing *2001: A Space Odyssey* as "insufferable" and "pseudo-profound" while introducing a chapter offering 13 philosophical interpretations of *Star Wars'* meaning doesn't have a Force-choke grasp of irony.

Perhaps the personal touch was intended to make this book stand-out from the rest. It works, in that we want to aim a Death Star at it. **Sam Ashurst**

i An eminent legal scholar, Cass Sunstein worked as a campaign advisor for Barack Obama.



STRANGER OF TEMPEST

Merces with mouths



► **RELEASED 16 JUNE**

480 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Tom Lloyd

► Publisher Gollancz

❖ **Lynx is a drifter and a fighter, trying to walk away from a past that he can't forget. He's not the sort to seek company, particularly not that of mercenaries, but he hasn't got many options. Anatin's Mercenary Deck aren't the worst out there – though they're an odd bunch. Thrown together with a raucous band of merces and some other oddballs, Lynx now has a more immediate past to be running from – and a future that he should probably run from too...**

From the very first page, this first book in Tom Lloyd's new *The God Fragments* series hurls you head-first into the action, letting

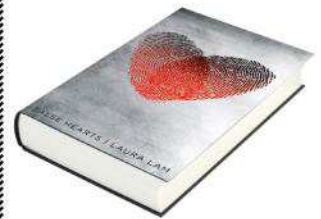
“Hurls you head-first into the action”

you catch up to the present-day timeline through a series of flashbacks, peppered throughout the start of the book. This might seem a little odd as a way to tell a story, but it works perfectly. The action in “now” is the perfect bait to get you hooked on “then”; once you start flipping between the two it's almost seamless, leaving you wanting more of both.

The world Lloyd wraps you in is just as gripping as his storytelling. Sure there's some stuff that could confuse at first, like the magic or the various cultures, but it doesn't. Lloyd slips it all around you like a cosy blanket, and before you realise it you're immersed in a world of mage-guns, shattered gods and cavernous ruins.

The mercenaries are a colourful and lively crowd. The banter between them is funny and sharp. They're not exactly a loveable bunch, but then you're not meant to love mercenaries. All the same, you'll care for them and feel every bit the comrade on their latest jaunt through hell and back. **Bridie Roman**

i In-between each book in the series Gollancz will be publishing bonus ebook novellas. The first is due in October.



FALSE HEARTS

SF goes SF



► **RELEASED 16 JUNE**

384 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Laura Lam

► Publisher Macmillan

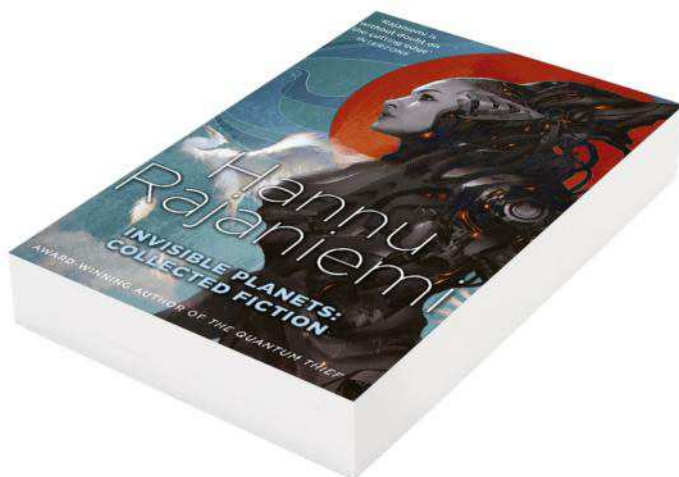
❖ **No one could accuse Laura Lam's latest of lacking ideas. Within the first few pages, a whole world has been introduced, along with two incredibly complex narrators. And it just spirals out from there.**

The world is a futuristic San Francisco, where crime is at an all-time low thanks to government-issue hallucinogenics and implantable surveillance chips. And the narrators? Tila and Taema, former conjoined twins who escaped the clutches of a creepy cult to build themselves new lives in the technologically enhanced big city. It's a lot to absorb, and that's before the face-swapping and drug contamination conspiracies kick in.

Scratch the shiny surface of all that sci-fi stuff, though, and you'll find a fairly straightforward noir plot: one twin is accused of murder, so the other assumes her identity to prove her innocence. Plus the romance is pretty dull. But it rattles along quickly, the brain-hacking stuff is interesting, and there are always new threats to deal with – even in the future, 'Frisco's underworld is seedy and horrible. That's what makes *False Hearts* so readable, in the end; it's slight, but its vision of the future is seductively terrifying. **Sarah Dobbs**

i Lam asked Twitter to name the megacorporation in her book. Author Nick Harkaway won out, with "Sudice".

BOOKS



INVISIBLE PLANETS

Short stories, big ideas



► **RELEASED 26 MAY**
256 pages | Paperback/ebook
► Author **Hannu Rajaniemi**
► Publisher **Gollancz**

Given that his debut trilogy featured Jean le Flambeur, a gentleman thief modelled on 19th century writer Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin, the uninitiated might be forgiven for expecting the fiction of Hannu Rajaniemi to be on the lighter side of SF. Nothing could be further from the truth.

While the post-cyberpunk *Quantum Thief* and its successors take delight in genre tropes and are written with a deft touch, they're dense with ideas and plot switchbacks, and demand close attention. The strange vistas of Ian McDonald's early work spring to mind as a comparison.

One result is that while those who get Rajaniemi really get his work, others just find it confusing. For the latter, this collection of short fiction may help. Essentially, it's a summation of how Rajaniemi got to where he is – which is a place where all sorts of batshit-crazy things are happening, and the gap between the real and digital worlds is at best indistinct.

It gathers together work previously available via such

sources as *Interzone*, themed collections edited by Jonathan Strahan and even an event at the Edinburgh Science Festival. The stories fall, broadly, into two categories: heavy-on-the-(computer)-science SF offerings and tales that draw on the mythology of Finnish émigré Rajaniemi's home country.

The best stories are terrific. "The Server And The Dragon" is an eerie creation myth; "The Haunting Of Apollo A7LB" starts out as a spooky ghost story before morphing into something entirely different; while "Snow White Is Dead" grew from an experiment to create "a story that reads you, a Choose Your Own Adventure without conscious choice" – so no faulting the man for ambition. Other offerings, however, are slight or – arguably a recurring fault in Rajaniemi's work – just a little too oblique.

A collection that combines the hard science smarts of, say, Gregory Benford with the hipster speak-inflected experimentation of M John Harrison, it's the perfect starting point for grappling with Rajaniemi's fiction.

Jonathan Wright

i Before doing his PhD, Rajaniemi did national service with the Finnish Defence Forces – as a research scientist.



THE STAR TREK BOOK

Data dump



► **RELEASED 1 JUNE**
336 pages | Hardback
► Authors **Paul Ruditis, Sanford Golden-Stone, Simon Hugo**
► Publisher **Dorling Kindersley**

The latest in a series which began with primers on subjects like religion, economics and psychology before branching out into fictional worlds, *The Star Trek Book* aims to provide, "an easy but comprehensive way of entering this dense and fascinating universe".

Cleanly designed, it's easy to dip into, split into sections themed around topics such as Starfleet, allies and enemies, and technology. These are further divided into overviews of generally one to four pages, broken up with infographics, timelines and quotations.

Unlike 2015's *The Sherlock Holmes Book*, it takes an "in-universe" perspective, approaching events as if they really took place. The 2009 reboot presents an obvious challenge, but one easily dealt with: after describing, say, the original Khan, an essay will simply move on to discuss the alternate-timeline counterpart.

It's probably best suited to fact-hungry teens introduced to Kirk by JJ, rather than seasoned Trekkers. That in-universe approach rules out critical analysis or behind-the-scenes stories, and doesn't leave much room for, well, fun. If that's what you're after, best look elsewhere. **Calvin Baxter**

i Due in October: a two-volume revised edition of *The Star Trek Encyclopedia*, with 300 pages of new entries.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



TIME & SPACES

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**
71 pages | Hardback
► Author **Yee Jee Tso**
► Publisher **MIWK Publishing**

- Subtitle: *A Photo Journal Of Doctor Who Filming*.
- Yee Jee Tso played nearly-companion Chang Lee in the 1996 *Doctor Who* TV movie.
- This slender volume was inspired by him finding negatives of snaps he took on-set in Vancouver in a garage (as well as some production documents).
- It's a bit disappointing. There are no surviving photos of the TARDIS console room, only represented by a 3D render. Bah.
- Most of the shots are of the Vancouver locations as they look today. And some of these are underpasses or car parks – not thrilling.
- Only six or seven photos are all that interesting – there are some lovely shots of the TARDIS Cloister Room.
- Still, the book includes some neat trivia, like the fact that Tso fell in a pond while filming the farewell sequence...



Never-before-seen shots from the TV movie.

Reviews



THE END OF THE WORLD RUNNING CLUB

Run for your wife



▶ **RELEASED 2 JUNE**

464 pages | Paperback/ebook

▶ Author Adrian J Walker

▶ Publisher Del Rey

❖ **Could you survive the end of the world?** Have you got the skills to cope without supermarkets, cars, electricity – even running water? For most of us, the answer is obviously not.

And the same should go for *The End Of The World Running Club's* Ed, too. Lazy, overweight and miserable, he's hardly a candidate for Survivor of the Year. But after the UK is hit by extra-terrestrial missiles and civilisation collapses, he's forced to learn all sorts of new skills. And when his family is airlifted to safety and he's left behind? It's time to run.

Most of the tried-and-tested apocalyptic scenarios crop up in this book: teenagers gone feral, military types abusing their power and so on. But Adrian Walker's easy style makes it compulsively readable even if you've got a bookcase full of apoca-lit. Choosing Ed as a narrator is a particularly clever move: he's petty, vindictive and generally awful, but he's also uncomfortably relatable. Even if you don't warm to him by the end, you'll at least feel inspired by him. If this book doesn't make you want to take up running, nothing will... **Sarah Dobbs**

i As research for the book, Adrian Walker talked to ultramarathoners to get their perspective on long-distance running.



WARLOCK HOLMES: A STUDY IN BRIMSTONE

Baker Street irregular



▶ **RELEASED 27 MAY**

384 pages | Paperback/ebook

▶ Author GS Denning

▶ Publisher Titan Books

❖ **Sherlock Holmes has had more reinventions than Madonna.** He's a kid! (*Young Sherlock Holmes*) He's a dog! (*Sherlock Hound*) He's an idiot! (*Without A Clue*) He's a reanimated corpse! (*Victorian Undead*) So turning Baker Street's finest into a master of the dark arts might not be very original – however, in Gabriel Denning's hands, it is great fun.

As with Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, much of Denning's shtick revolves around finding new riffs on Arthur Conan Doyle's original tales. But rather than simply trading up the spyglass for a smartphone, *Warlock Holmes* goes balls out by, for example, presenting the Baker Street Irregulars as shape-shifting rats and Inspector Lestrade as a vampire who drinks neat nosebleed.

That said, the plot beats stick so faithfully to *A Study In Scarlet* – plus hocus-pocus spins on five other original Holmes stories – you can't help but feel Conan Doyle is doing a lot of the heavy lifting here. But a rich seam of black comedy helps add distinction, while the cliffhanger ending sets up an intriguing demonic encounter in the forthcoming *Battle Of Baskerville Hall*. **Paul Kirkley**

i Also recently published, by Abaddon Books: *alt.sherlock.holmes*, a collection of three novellas.

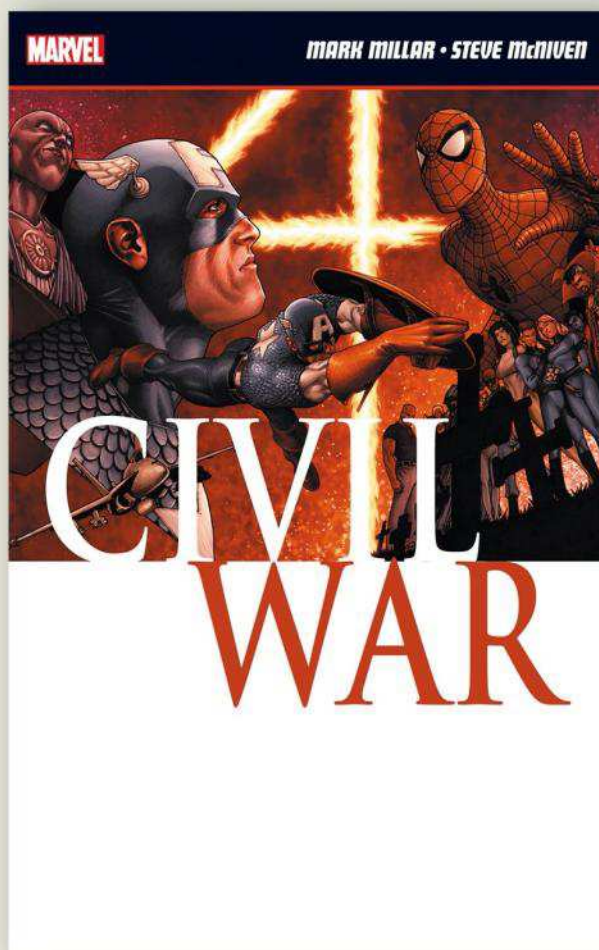
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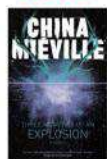
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REISSUES

Coming to paperback this month: China Miéville's second collection of short stories, **THREE MOMENTS OF AN EXPLOSION** (★★★★, 2 June, Picador).



It features 28 tales (some published previously), ranging from body-horror vignettes and eerie

metamorphoses to reflections on revolutions. We said: "A volume that suggests Miéville exploring the unsettling possibilities of short fiction to describe our unsettled lives, rather as JG Ballard did in the last century." The first shiny-new-integrated-continuity novel set between *Return Of The Jedi* and *The Force Awakens*, **STAR WARS: AFTERMATH** (★★★★, 26 May, Arrow) sees



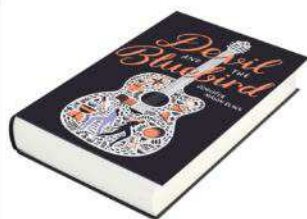
what's left of the Empire's officers getting together to draw their plans for the future... Boo!

Hiss! We said: "Chuck Wendig does a decent enough job, crafting a fun adventure... but the short scenes try too hard to be cinematic, the metaphors are clunky, and nods to the movies are a bit too on the nose." Incidentally, second book of the trilogy *Aftermath: Life Debt* is due out on 12 July. Finally, swift on the heels of Jenny Colgan's new *Doctor Who* novel comes the reissue of



RESISTANCE IS FUTILE (★★★★, 2 June, Orbit), a bittersweet love story with added maths, aliens

and geekery. It follows Connie, a mathematician recruited to a top-secret project to crack the code on a signal from space, resulting in a mad – and not entirely convincing – adventure. We said: "Never less than entertaining, as well as wonderfully funny at times."



DEVIL AND THE BLUEBIRD

An alt-folk tale



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

336 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Jennifer Mason-Black

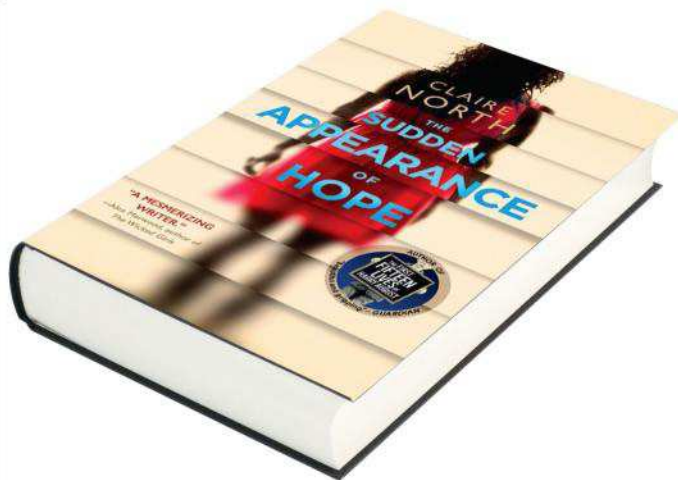
► Publisher Abrams Books

❖ **No one ever knows what they're really getting themselves into when they make a deal with the devil.** Blue Riley certainly doesn't. An orphan in a small town, Blue heads out to the crossroads with her guitar one night, hoping the devil will help her track down her older sister. And while she does eventually get her wish, the deal is nowhere near as straightforward as she'd hoped.

In spite of its fantasy trappings, *Devil And The Bluebird* is a coming-of-age road story at heart. And though Blue thinks she's just looking for her sister, she's really searching for lots of things: friends, for starters; somewhere to call home; and half a dozen lessons about herself and the world around her.

There's so much warmth in this book that its scarier moments – and there are several, because a lone teenager is an easy target for all kinds of evils – are all the more horrifying by comparison. But no matter what horrors Blue faces, she's always got hope, music, and the kindness of strangers to help her on her way. Soothing and lyrical, this might be the most optimistic book you'll read this year. **Sarah Dobbs**

i Mason-Black's kids made a snow Blue (snow guitar and all!) in their garden to mark the sale of the book. Aww.



THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF HOPE

Now you see her...



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

480 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Claire North

► Publisher Orbit

❖ **Globetrotting jewel thieves** are never not cool. (We mean fictional ones, obviously, for the benefit of any police reading this.) A well-planned heist is always fun; a well-planned heist in a glamorous location at the expense of the obnoxiously over-privileged is even better. And as she steals the diamonds of well-heeled gits from Milan to Dubai, Hope Arden has a secret weapon in her larcenous arsenal. Within minutes of encountering her, people – victims, police, lovers, even family – forget her existence. Quite literally, once out of sight, she's out of mind.

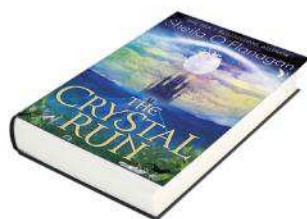
But this power isn't something Hope can turn on and off, and Claire North mines the implications of it very effectively, for both drama and character study. Doomed to meet people, over and over again, for the first time – doomed to friendships that last only as long as the other party is in earshot, and awake – Hope

travels the world in suffocating isolation (and gets terrible service in restaurants, to boot). Hope's struggles to understand who she is if no one sees her, and the way her isolation lets her ignore the effects of her actions, are set against the backdrop of a wildly popular new app, Perfection, which promises not just self-improvement, but self-perfection. Exploiting elite vanity and wannabe-elite aspirations alike, Perfection shepherds its users towards an algorithmic ideal of physical appearance, outlook and lifestyle, whatever the cost.

The science behind Perfection is devised to help people overcome social awkwardness, and there are shades of Ken MacLeod's *Intrusion* in North's exploration of a well-meant idea going drastically wrong. As a critique of global capitalism, this is pointed without being preachy, and there are no shining heroes or scenery-chewing villains, only well-rounded characters inhabiting the moral margins, on all sides. **Nic Clarke**

i Like her heroine, Claire North has several names: she's a pseudonym for Catherine Webb, who also writes YA as Kate Griffin.

Reviews



THE CRYSTAL RUN

Run away!



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

318 pages | Hardback/ebook

▶ Author Sheila O'Flanagan

▶ Publisher Hodder Children's Books

Most adults have stories of trying to avoid school bullies at some point. Maybe you walked a longer way home, maybe you waited an extra half hour before leaving the playground, or maybe you ran down an alleyway, jumped over a wall and ended up in a strange fantasy land where children are being trained and tested for a dangerous quest. No?

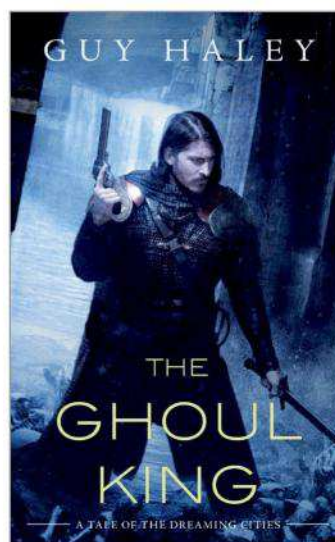
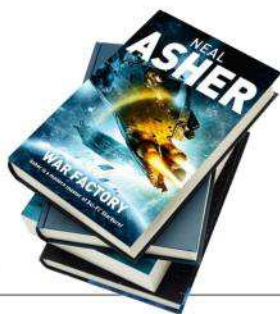
This is what happens to Joe, who wakes up in the country of Carcassia after crashing through a strange shimmering wall. He soon befriends Kaia, a Runner who must leave her home and travel through the enemy land of Kanabia in order to replenish the power sources of the shield which protects Carcassia, and they travel together as he attempts to find his own way home.

Paper-thin characters, clunky dialogue and an overly descriptive, ultra-slow introduction to the book's worlds do not give *The Crystal Run* the best of starts. As the story moves on there are signs the novel will redeem itself as the plot finally starts to engage, and there are intriguing hints that all is not what it seems within Kanabia. However an abrupt, confusing ending undoes the good work of the second half and will leave you with an overwhelming feeling of "huh?". Avoid. **Rhian Drinkwater**

Sheila O'Flanagan is a bestselling author of 20 (non-genre) adult novels, but this is her first one for children.

ALSO OUT

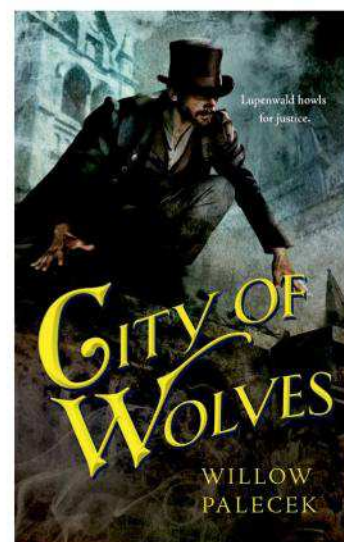
It's a busy month for books, with new entries in numerous ongoing sagas. The resurrected Thorvald Spear continues to hunt rogue AI Penny Royal in **WAR FACTORY** (out now, Tor), the second in Neal Asher's *Transformation* series. Sookie Stackhouse creator Charlaine Harris's *Midnight, Texas* trilogy draws to a conclusion with **NIGHT SHIFT** (out now, Gollancz). In **WHO KILLED SHERLOCK HOLMES?** (out now, Pan), the third of Paul Cornell's gritty *Shadow Police* stories set in a gothic fantasy London, supernaturally-sighted copper James Quill investigates who's put a ceremonial dagger through the great detective's ghost. Peter Newman journeys back to the demon-infested world of *The Vagrant* ("brilliantly imaginative", we said) with sequel **THE MALICE** (out now, Harper Voyager). And warrior queen Zosia returns in **A BLADE OF BLACK STEEL** (out now, Orbit), Alex Marshall-aka-Jesse Bullington's follow-up to epic fantasy *A Crown For Cold Silver* - expect more "humour, zippy dialogue and moments of grisly darkness". Elsewhere, **STAR WARS GRAPHICS** (out now, Egmont) uses cutesy infographics to impart vital data on everything from Leia's wardrobe to the diameter of Coruscant, while **NEVER SLEEP AGAIN** (out now, Pocket Books) chronicles the making of Wes Craven's *A Nightmare On Elm Street* back in 1984, using dozens of exclusive interviews with cast and crew to get the inside skinny on fearsome Freddy. Phew!



The Ghoul King

"Entertaining and exciting but very dark. If grimdark is your thing, then this is a great read for you."

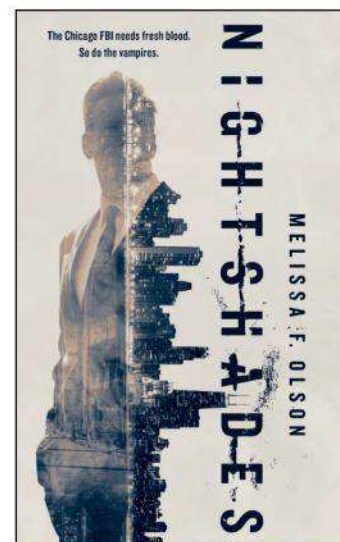
—The Exploding Spaceship.



City of Wolves

"A tantalizing glimpse of an interesting imagined world."

—Publishers Weekly



Nightshades

"Melissa F. Olson writes with razorblades made of moonlight, cutting through shadows to share with us the beating heart of her characters and story. My only problem with being immersed in *Nightshades* is that I had to keep coming up for air. If I could breathe words, they'd be hers."

—Charles de Lint

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ESCAPOLOGY *by Ren Warom*

A fast-paced thriller set in a brutal underworld, which is both a search for self and family and a desperate race for survival.

When Mimic brings Shock a job which could help him escape his miserable existence, he accepts, little realizing that this will turn out to be his most impossible, illegal and insane assignment yet.

There are many places to party on Foon Gung's claustrophobic sprawl but Plaza's the only one bright enough to be seen from the hubs, the cities smugly orbiting the boundary to endless space. Plaza's high-end is a migraine-provoking frenzy; a gaudy parade of VIP clubs, Slip joints, art houses and karaoke bars. Despite the money practically oozing from the cracks in the sidewalk these multifarious amusements look cheap stacked side by side and swaddled in neon and fairy lights spangled as a K-rock star's thong.

This scene is as far from Shock's idea of a good time as it's possible to get, but he's not surprised Mim's blipped to meet him here. She's a freaking magpie, and always out for

maximum flim expenditure. Doubtless she's not numbing her arse much, probably got a gaggle of lanky Biz-Cad creeps orbiting her horizons, dazzled by the glare of her headlights.

Reluctantly jacking her IM, Shock hooks her signal, tracing it to one of the cheesiest karaoke joints on Plaza: Keen Machine.

"F**king jim goddamn dandy," he sneers, shielding his eyes from the high-intensity blast of illumination that comprizes the entrance.

Concentrating hard to remain steady on his feet, he rolls in past the muscle, a gaggle of uber-pumped gorks in suits, their necks so thick they look like truncated thighs, and heads for the bar. There's a skinny little short-arse with neon fangs serving the whole thirty meters of polished copper by herself, clacking to and fro on knife-blade heels and snarling at everyone as she juggles glasses and snatches flim.

All out of sympathy, his head still basically tofu beneath the straggly S bump-sheen and Mim-xiety, he orders an apple juice, no ice, with two shots of pure green caffeine for himself and a voddie lime slim for Mim and skulks off to hunt her down in the shadowy recesses.

Predictably, he finds her holding court amongst a gaggle of wide-eyed Frat boys from the Biz-Cad, a different shade of learning than

The Author



→ Ren Warom lives in the West Midlands with her three children, innumerable cats, a very friendly corn snake, and far, far too many books. She haunts Twitter as @RenWarom, and can be found on her YouTube channel talking about mental health issues and, of course, books. *Escapology* is her debut novel.

the academies, for hI-Qs and the wealthy. These are the latter, all spending daddy's money and trying to look smart in clothes so new they still smell of the print factory; a clean, sharp scent not unlike bleach.

Mim's in her usual uniform, a bodysuit fitted close as second skin in holographic material, blending her into the corner like a mirage; the only signs of her existence an inky mass of iridescent black hair and those crazy mirrored eyes. Mim's a chameleon – you can't see her, only her surroundings and yourself, reflected back at you into infinity.

That's Mim's problem. She lives her role. 24/7 365 in Imp-mode. Consequently she's only ever been any use as a reflection. Expecting to find a person somewhere in those vague distorted echoes is a sure-fire route to ending up disappointed. At least he did.

Disappointed and sick to the core, his heart aching, just like it

is now. He only has to look at her to feel wrecked. She's a wall he keeps crashing into.

He still remembers the first time he saw her. In Tech. She'd transferred in from Cad after a Tech-skills test, was perched like a crow in the window of his lecture hall on the seventeenth floor, smoking a long, purple cigarette. Psy. Illegal as hell. She wore a flimsy, red-plastic playsuit and shades, had her feet rammed into

matching bladders, stack-heel shoes with a mag-strip for speeding along mono lines, and he fell for her catastrophically.

Her distant grin and cold mirror eyes gave him shivers he mistook for attraction, and that off-hand way she has drove him out of his mind, full-on crazy as a primo high. He took to following her like a shadow, hanging in her wake, nebulous as a cloud of smoke and half as noticeable. Sometimes he thinks she only noticed him by accident, out of the corner of her eye, like seeing a ghost. Appropriate. It makes him laugh nowadays. But only now and then.

It took him a year to persuade her to f**k him, another for her to scheme a way to get rid of him. By that time they'd moved in together and everyone spoke their name in one long breathless mouthful, like they were conjoined twins in a freak show. What a f**king waste of two years, and he doesn't plead the stupidity of youth about any of it. He's forgotten how to be that kind to himself.

Unable to muster up a shout, Shock stands at her table and stares, waiting until she notices him, trying to ignore how much like the old days it is. This is his choice, not hers – and it's all business. There's nothing personal in it. When she clocks him, her headlights flare, and she throws down a serious grin, like a challenge.

"Shocking boy, long time no spy." She makes shooing gestures with tiny hands tipped with nails like talons. She-bird. Bird of prey. "Skedaddle, dickheads, my boy is here. We have business."

"I'm not your boy," he says with infinitely more calm than he feels, sliding in beside her and slamming her drink down next to a half-empty flute of what looks like liquid purple glitter and smells bad as candy-coated burnt rubber. "What's the job?"

"What, no time to reminisce?"

She tries for a hurt tone, but it falls light years short. Sounds like she's asking a bug she's got under a magnifying glass if the sun burns yet. The fact she still gets to him as easily as when he thought they were a going concern makes him

despise her even more. Or maybe he just despises himself?

He should quit the habit of her. Quit this vicious cycle, a viscous cycle, clinging to him like she still does, out of convenience, and he lets her. More fool him. He takes a deep breath, feeling like he's sucking the whole club down into his lungs.

"Job, Mim, or I'm out."

Her teeth flash, blinding, making him dizzy.

"Tetchy," she drawls, and he knows that she's feeling his discomfort and loving it. F**k but he hates her. "I need a bullseye, close as dammit to my stats as you can hit. Two K flim."

Mim is an ID sniper, an info clone, an Imp. She hunts, copies, and temporarily replaces for the purposes of theft. Pretty good at hacking bullseyes on a basic level, Mim's proficiency dive-bombs to below useless with any kind of VA, Virtual Armament.

Her current f**k, Johnny Sez, an L-plates hack, can only crack up to level 6. For anything

“Her distant grin and cold mirror eyes gave him shivers he mistook for attraction”

above that, she has Shock, her reluctant hacker on call. It's a crap job, and far too intermittent, but it's flim and really he's in no position to be picky. He wishes he were. Whenever he works for Mim, she always wants delivery in person. Maximising his discomfort is one of her favourite pastimes.

"I need the company you expect me to phish in before I Y or N."

"Olbax Corp."

Olbax. Great. Could be worse though. Could be Paraderm.

"That's a pretty mean amount of VA for Two K. Two K barely even covers my f**king rent."

"Take it or leave it, sport. Not running a charity here. Or maybe you don't think you need it?" She gives him the sly look, up and down. "I'm guessing that's why you're looking so swell. Corpse-chic suits you."

Shock tries not to react, it costs him way too much dignity and temporary control of an eyelid.

"Fine."

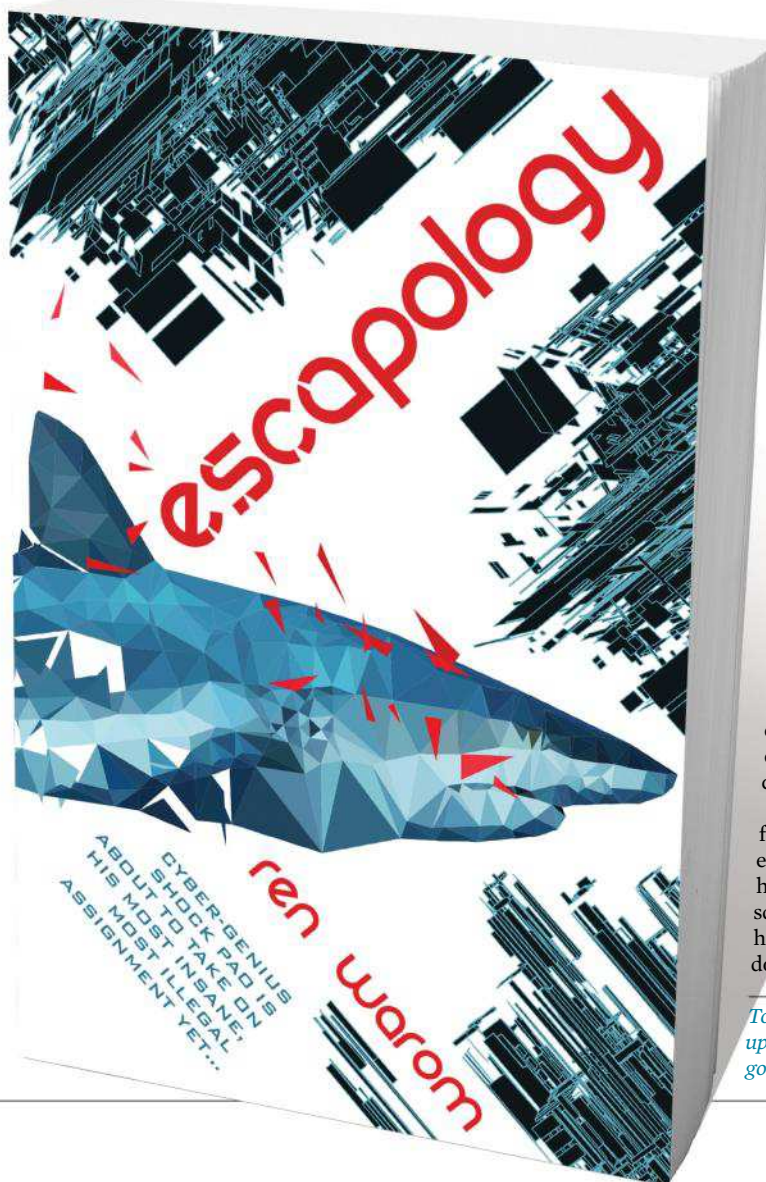
She reaches out and pats his hand.

"Good Shocking Boy. Info in your IM as we speak."

Sliding out of the booth, the back of his hand tingling like it's been stung, he makes for the Risi District and enough alcohol to drown a land ship the size of the Gung. Maybe this time it'll be enough to drown out the ugly mix of hate and need he gets from too close proximity to her.

He makes a concerted effort to forget about the job before he's even halfway there. At some point his IM will blip and Mim will squeak a reminder. Until then, f**k her, f**k everything. All he wants to do is drown. ●

To find out what happens next, pick up *Escapology*, out on 14 June in all good bookshops. Ebook also available.



SPIDER-MAN/DEADPOOL

Web-head meets pizza-face



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

▶ Publisher Marvel Comics

▶ Writer Joe Kelly

▶ Artist Ed McGuinness

ISSUES 1-4 It's a pretty great year

to be Deadpool. First, he headlined a movie so faithful to his foul-minded sensibilities it got slapped with an R rating. Now he's co-fronting a comic with one of Marvel's flagship characters, a fan favourite who's just made his Marvel Cinematic Universe debut in *Civil War*, your friendly neighbourhood... Well, you don't need us to tell you, his name's in the title.

Putting Deadpool and Spider-Man together makes so much sense that it's hard to fathom how this is their first ongoing series. Both constantly quip in the face of

danger (Spidey because he's projecting confidence, Deadpool because his regenerative powers mean he has nothing to be scared of), their costumes could come from the same spandex-tailor, and both make pop culture references so frequently we wonder how they manage to fit superheroics in between *Game Of Thrones/Keeping Up With The Kardashians* marathons. But much of the giddy fun of *Spider-Man/Deadpool* comes from revelling in the differences between the characters. It's no coincidence the mouthy merc promoted his movie with a twist on one of Spider-Man's key catchphrases, bellowing, "With great power comes great irresponsibility" at anyone who'd listen – the two have very distinct core philosophies. As a result, the comic plays like a

glorious twist on the buddy-cop movie, with Spider-Man (who'd be the rebellious one in any other book) playing straight-man to Wade Wilson's flirtatious and trigger-happy heel.

The high concept bringing the pair together is inspired: Deadpool's hired to assassinate Peter Parker so, as he only kills bad guys, he hangs out with Peter's "pal" Spider-Man, to get the intel he needs to make up his mind about taking the job, all the while hoping the webslinger will still be his friend/crush after he's done the deed.

The Deadpool legends behind Wilson's solo title from back in 1997 deliver the premise in spades,

“The high concept bringing the pair together is inspired”

with Joe Kelly walking the spider-web tightrope of keeping 'Pool and Spidey's snark distinctive, and Ed McGuinness's cartoony art adding layers of fun to proceedings.

This is an extremely fast-paced book, feeling more like a limited series than an ongoing one. Time will tell if Kelly and McGuinness can maintain the pace over the long stretch, but with the first four issues seeing the boys busting up drug-rings, taking down sewer-monsters, escaping giant demons and, um, mud-wrestling, not even the sky's the limit.

2016's been good to both Deadpool and Spider-Man. For fans of both, it's now got even better. **Sam Ashurst**

i Working on a comic with Spidey in it has its limits: Kelly had to cut Deadpool choking someone with his own intestines.



Karnak: first appeared back in 1965.

KARNAK

Philosophical ultraviolence



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

▶ Publisher Marvel

▶ Writer Warren Ellis

▶ Artists Gerardo Zaffino, Roland Boschi, Antonio Fuso

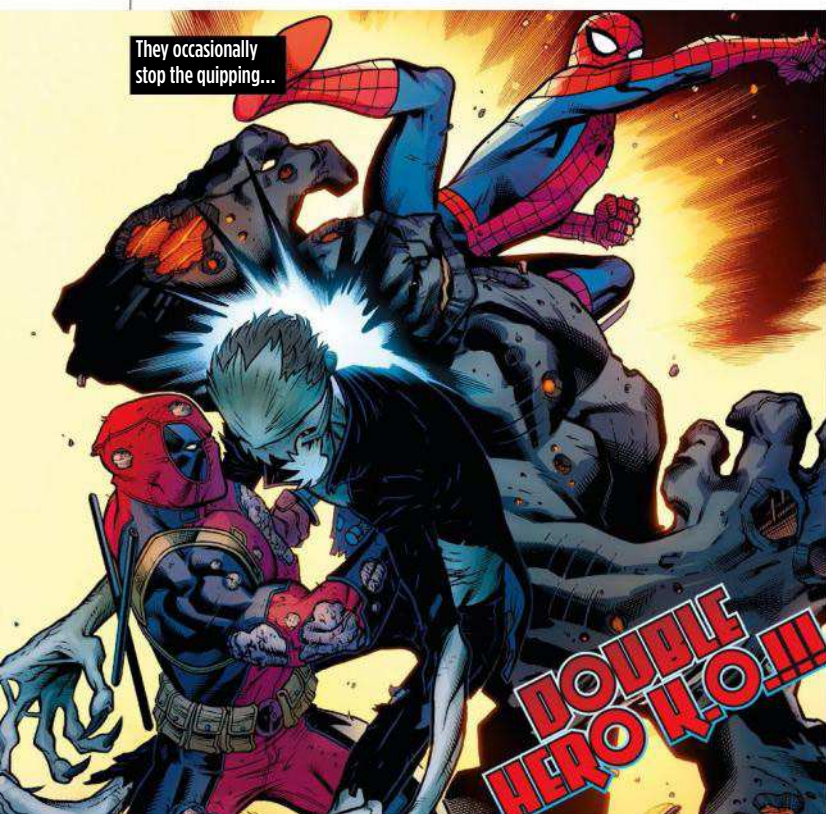
ISSUES 1-3 The movie

adaptation of *The Inhumans* might be off the schedule for now, but Marvel is still pushing the superpowered characters strongly in other areas. Its latest effort is a solo series for one of the more distinctive Inhumans. Untouched by the transformative Terrigen mists, Karnak is a master philosopher, martial artist and tactician with a unique view of the world, and Marvel has enlisted Warren Ellis to give him a new and attention-grabbing showcase.

Three issues in, this series is delivering a blend of mind-boggling concepts and lurid violence, as Karnak is enlisted by SHIELD to rescue an Inhuman child from a twisted scientific cult, only to discover that the child may possess god-like powers. Ellis's scripts display his usual fierce intelligence while also pulling off vivid setpieces, and his portrayal of Karnak is weird, fascinating and unpredictable.

The visuals aren't as focused and powerful as on Ellis's *Moon Knight* issues – especially after a change in regular series artist following issue two – and the offbeat pacing takes some getting used to, but Ellis has once again delivered a bonkers comic that propels mainstream superhero action in a very intriguing direction. **Saxon Bullock**

i Warren Ellis's next prose project is a techno-thriller novella called *Normal*. It's due to be published in November.



They occasionally stop the quipping...

DOUBLE HERO K.O.!!!



Come on, tuck yourself in, lass.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Taking flight



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Marvel Comics
► Writers Michele Fazekas, Tara Butters
► Artist Kris Anka

ISSUES 1-4 After swiftly establishing the premise in its opening pages – our titular hero is the new leader of an Alpha Flight space station, tasked with protecting the universe – it quickly becomes clear that *Captain Marvel* is a science fiction fan's dream.

Issue one feels like a cross between *Star Wars* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (the dogfights of the former, mixed with the space politics of the latter), issue two contains a perfectly directed *Alien* tribute, and issue three features a small cat in a flying robot suit.

Old-school Alpha Flight geeks will get giddy at the gloriously-rendered representations of Sasquatch and Puck, while MCU addicts will get a kick out of Rocket Raccoon's cameo. But even someone completely new to the mythology will get a kick out of this book – the art's beautiful, with wild angles providing quick movement and unusual perspectives, highlighting the anime-influenced character design.

One minor criticism: the first four issues pack in enough epic moments to sustain several graphic novels. It makes for an entertaining read, but these characters are so likeable we'd welcome a bit of breathing room to get to know them better. **Sam Ashurst**

i Agent Carter showrunners Fazekas and Butters met while both were working on *The X-Files*.



Is he talking about taking up smoking?

MIRROR Animal Magic



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Image Comics
► Writer Emma Rios
► Artist Hwei Lim

ISSUES 1-3 From *Prophet and 8house* to the experimental anthology *Island*, the Image Comics titles overseen by writer/artist Brandon Graham over the last few years have stretched the limits of mainstream comics storytelling. Now, a tale that started life as part of the *8house* shared universe has become a full-scale ongoing series, one that combines a lyrical narrative style with truly beautiful visuals.

Telling a story that unfolds across multiple timelines, *Mirror* follows the lives of young mage Ivan and dog-girl Sena, who grow up on a colony on the asteroid of Irzah. Here, animals have been

gifted with intelligence and magical abilities, but the human colonists want to exploit those abilities, leading to Ivan and Sena's separation, and years of bloodshed.

Written by *Pretty Deadly* artist Emma Rios, with amazing visuals from Malaysian illustrator Hwei Lim, *Mirror* mixes SF and fantasy in a similar manner to fellow Image title *Saga*, but tells a much stranger, more challenging story. The elegant page layouts give the dense plotting a sense of poetry and magic, while Lim's watercolour-influenced style conjures up gorgeous vistas and characterful creature designs.

Three issues in, the plot is already revealing fascinating interconnections, although there are times when the complex storytelling and multiple timelines get in the way of the book's emotional core. Beautiful and a touch inscrutable, *Mirror* isn't the most accessible of the current batch of Image-published genre comics, but it's still a lushly crafted oddity that's well worth your attention. **Saxon Bullock**

i Rios was inspired by Osamu Tezuka's 1970-1971 manga *Ode To Kirihito*, about a disease that turns people into animals.



A man inside a chimney was later shot.

SNOWFALL

Winter In America



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Image Comics
► Writer Joe Harris
► Artist Martin Morazzo

ISSUES 1-3 Dystopian futures are ten-a-penny, but Joe Harris and Martin Morazzo manage to make the world of *Snowfall* feel fresh.

It's 2045, and the world's ecology has crashed. It hasn't snowed in a decade and America is now effectively run by the Hazeltine Corporation. The reappearance of a weather-controlling eco-terrorist known as the White Wizard, however, changes everything. A student, Anthony Farrow, sets out to join him, but crosses path with one of Hazeltine's deadly inspectors...

Ecological themes and strong world-building make *Snowfall* a distinctive, occasionally exciting series, if not quite the sci-fi classic you hope for. The characterisation of its three leads is sketchy in places, and while it's pleasing that none of them are straight goodies or baddies, it's hard to care about why the White Wizard is doing what he's doing – he usually just comes across as a bit of a crank. Joe Harris's script overloads the reader with info. And while Morazzo's art is fine, with some distinctive character design, Kelly Fitzpatrick's colouring is flat in places.

Despite these flaws, *Snowfall* is distinctive and engaging enough to stick with, a cyberpunk fairytale with frost on its mirrorshades. **Will Salmon**

i Joe Harris and Martin Morazzo previously collaborated on the similarly environmentally-themed *Great Pacific*.

“*Mirror* is beautiful and a touch inscrutable”

DOCTOR WHO: THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES Volume One

Tennant's Extra

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

165 minutes | CD/download

► Publisher Big Finish

AUDIO DRAMA It may have been relatively short-lived, but the onscreen pairing of David Tennant as the Tenth Doctor and Catherine Tate as Donna has ended up one of the most well-loved Doctor/companion teams in the show's history. Now, thanks to Big Finish's

continuing exploration of new *Who*, the double-act returns in a new trio of adventures (available both in a limited box set and as three separate releases) that successfully conjure up the broad, enthusiastic tone of the RTD era.

First up is *Technophobia*, a tale of modern life spinning out of control, as the Doctor and Donna's visit to a London museum goes awry when a bizarre fear of technology starts infecting the

population. With plenty of action, humour and intrigue, Matt Fitton's script keeps the pace high and the tone playful, even if overall the story feels very traditional.

Time Reaver gives us a more space-bound adventure, using audio's limitless budget to take the Doctor and Donna to the sprawling spaceport planet of Calibris. Here, they run foul of an evil tentacled gangster keen to obtain a cache of lethal weaponry. Writer Jenny T Colgan maintains a nice balance between energetic

For a Doctor that didn't want to die, Ten is wearing entirely the wrong colour shirt.

“This is unmissable stuff for Tenth Doctor fans”

action, comic-book luridness and emotive drama.

The adventures are rounded off in fine style with *Death And The Queen* by James Goss, in which Donna falls for the ruler of a secretive kingdom and gets the chance for a proper fairytale wedding. Unfortunately, there's a major catch in the deal, and it's up to the Doctor to save her in this witty and inventive romp that delivers plenty of laughs while also showcasing the depth of the Doctor/Donna relationship.

Across all three releases, both leads step back into their roles so smoothly it's as if they've never been away, displaying the same chemistry and comic timing that made their TV episodes so memorable. A major step up from Big Finish's previous new *Who* releases, this is unmissable stuff for Tenth Doctor fans, and hopefully just the first of many return visits for Tennant and Tate. **Saxon Bullock**

i *Death And The Queen* also co-stars Alice Krige, who played the Borg Queen in *Star Trek: First Contact*.

The model village was lovely.



IMPERIAL KNIGHTS: RENEGADE

Clash Of The Titans

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

Two players

► Publisher Games Workshop

TABLETOP GAME Games

Workshop's latest is an intimidating thing. Open the box and you're confronted with a mountain of plastic – enough to make two enormous Imperial Knight models and some ruined buildings. The game itself, however, is easy to get to grips with, the rules taking up a mere two pages rather than the usual fat manual.

An Imperial Knight (a mech or “Titan” in *Warhammer 40,000* parlance) has gone rogue and so the Imperium dispatches another to take it down. Players choose between the evil Litany Of Destruction or the valiant Ever-Stalwart and must reduce their opponent to scrap.

They do this by picking a number of actions each turn and resolving them in a priority order. Usually that will involve a combination of moving and shooting, though it's harder to land a hit if you choose a rapid Snap Attack over planting your feet and taking a more considered shot.

And that's it. It's fast and fun, though it works better at the end of a games night, rather than as the main event. And while the price is high, the models are exceptional and useable in the main *Warhammer* game. **Will Salmon**

i At 40 feet high, Imperial Knights are among the smallest Titans. Emperor Titans are said to be 400 feet high.





NAUGHTY DOG



"THE BIGGEST GAME
OF THE YEAR"

EDGE

UNCHARTED 4

A Thief's End

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PS4



Reviews

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COLLECTABLES



COLLECTABLES

What we've been playing with this month

1 If only Zack Snyder's movie shared an iota of the sense of fun of these **Batman vs Superman Mopeez** (FPI price £8.99 each; product codes D6202, D6203, D6204, D6205), the latest in Funko's range of cutesy plushes. Pictured are Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman and Aquaman. All look rather down in the mouth (perhaps they saw the film), and

feature weighted bottoms to keep them sitting up. Best feature of these: Wonder Woman's corduroy hair – a phrase that's surely crying out to be the name of a band.

2 Just two of a wide range, this pair of **Star Wars tin signs** (FPI price £3.99 each; product codes D5852, D5850) come with screw holes in each

corner so you can affix them to a wall or door. But where to put them? Well, "Beware Ewok crossing" could adorn your fluffy puppy's favourite perambulation route perhaps, while the Death Star one, with "Enter at own risk" emblazoned on it, would suit the door of the most danger-filled room in your house – a teenage boy's toxic, porn-stuffed tip,

perhaps? There's an "I Am Your Father" one too – perfect for your dad's bedroom, obvs.

3 Margot Robbie's psycho-clubber version of Harley Quinn is set to steal *Suicide Squad*, but here's a chance to celebrate the Joker's main squeeze in her classic domino-masked jester's finery. This **Batman: The Animated Series bust bank** (FPI price £19.99; product code D3895) is the perfect place to stash the spoils of your deranged looting spree – face it, that smile says "Crime sure does pay, Puddin'!" There are several other *Batman: TAS* bust banks available, but this is the one that

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Reviews



tells the world you're a certified homicidal clown-freak.

4 "Wookiee Cookies" proclaims the legend on this chunky and overwhelmingly beige **Chewbacca mug with cookie slot** (FPI price £10.99; product code D5843). It features a nice drawing of the famously biscuit-loving furball on one side (he looks sad, perhaps remembering *that* scene from *The Force Awakens*) and the *Star Wars* logo on the other. Hidden from view here is the cookie slot, which is a bit of a weird addition – certainly big enough for a HobNob (other snacks are available), but probably not for one of those

hand-made ones you get in fancy coffee shops nowadays. And anyway, is anyone really *that* short on space?

5 Engage in your very own Civil War at home, by pitting these **Pop! Vinyl Marvel figures** (FPI price £8.99 each; product codes D5593, D5594, D5595, D5599, D5600) against each other. It'll probably be an uneventful scrap, seeing as their superpowers are limited to vicious nodding – not to mention the fact that Scarlet Witch's head is so much bigger than her body that life is essentially a constant struggle to stay upright. Still, it's good to see that War Machine

comes complete with his, er, famous cricket bat. Owzat?

6 It may not be bigger on the inside (don't worry, we've checked) but this kid-friendly **TARDIS duffle bag** is ideal for transporting, say, your Speedos and your towel to the municipal pool. Made of polyurethane and featuring the classic Police Box frontage (though not, oddly, the version currently being used – where's the St John's Ambulance badge, huh?), it's very nicely detailed – in case you can't make it out, some of the finer details, like the door handles, are only visible when the light catches them. ●

THINGS TO COME

More goodies on their way soon



LIFE-SIZE SLIMER REPLICA

◆ Good grief, imagine having this squatting in a corner of the living room! Made of foam rubber and latex, it stands three feet high. Can we have a flip-top version to chuck your food waste in next, please, NECA?



1:12 FRANKENSTEIN FIGURE

◆ The latest in Mezco's 1:12 Collective range features an uncanny likeness of the Karloff monster from the 1931 classic. He comes with all sorts of accessories, including swappable heads and hands and functioning shackles.



LAMENT CONFIGURATION DICE

◆ These *Hellraiser* collectables turn the puzzle box used to summon the skin-flaying Cenobites into plush dice of the sort Del Boy might hang in his Reliant Regal. Somewhere in a torture dimension Pinhead is face-palming.

Photography by Olly Curtis



James Franco's Jake: smart but not the President.

SEASON 1

11.22.63

Stephen King takes aim at JFK

► **UK Broadcast** Fox, Sundays until 29 May
► **US Broadcast** Hulu, finished
► **Episodes Reviewed** 1.01-1.08

◉ In 1992 *Quantum Leap* took a rare turn into serious territory when it featured a two-part episode that had time-traveller Sam Beckett leaping into the body of Lee Harvey Oswald. It was "worthy", yes, but out of the show's entire run it was also, paradoxically, one of its least interesting concepts. We knew JFK would still die at the end, so what was the point? And Oswald, for all the endless conspiracy theories about him, isn't a

historical figure you actually empathise with – by all accounts, he was a right grumpy bastard, and hardly someone you'd want to hang out with... particularly when there can never be any concrete answers about what he really did do on that sunny day in Dallas.

With this in mind, you'd think that if you were Stephen King and you came up with the idea of writing a similar tale – sending someone back in time to shadow Oswald and learn the truth about the so-called Day That Shook The World (and maybe save President Kennedy to boot) – you'd try to make Oswald a little more...

watchable. Empathetic, perhaps. Innocent. Diabolical. Anything. You've already got a time-traveller hero, after all; more reality-tinkering surely wouldn't go amiss?

Well, phooey to that. This eight-part adaptation of King's US-dated 11.22.63 spends an extraordinary amount of time focusing on someone we genuinely don't like, as we see our lead character, Jake, bugging Oswald's apartment, following him around, tracking people who meet with him and generally boring the tits off us. Watching Lee Harvey Oswald is, at times, almost unforgivably dull, despite a decent

ZOOM IN



TRIVIA ▲

→ There's a great pun in 1.05 as someone is stabbed through the head with a poker – a genuine "poker face".

BEST EPISODE

→ Unsurprisingly, finale "The Day In Question" is the show's best hour, even though most of the first third is taken up with Jake and Sadie running endlessly towards the Texas Book Depository.

BEST MOMENT

→ The final scene, but that's spoilery, so... In 1.04 Jake recites the plot of *The Godfather* to expand a lie about him being in Witness Protection.

BEST DIALOGUE

→ When Jake is asked if he served in the war, he replies that he did two tours in Korea. "What unit?" says his friend. Jake replies: "M*A*S*H 4077th."

DID YOU SPOT? ▼

→ At the foot of the stairs in the Book Depository is a wee King homage: the words "RedRum" from *The Shining*.



Early iPhones:
cumbersome.

performance from Daniel Webber as the possible patsy.

Thankfully, everything that *isn't* Oswald in this miniseries is far more watchable. At first you're not sure if you're going to like James Franco's Jake: sure, he seems amiable enough, but time-travelling alone in a TV show rather than in the pages of a book means that we don't know what he's thinking. For a couple of episodes, he's nothing more than a cypher who moves from place to place without a word; the audience has no idea how he's feeling, whether he's freaked out or happy or sad – he's just *there*. And so when Jake teams up with a young guy named Bill – a character who wasn't in the book – and bounces his ideas off him, things massively improve. Just hearing Jake announce, "Let's save JFK, pardner!" in episode three sends everything clicking into gear.

There are other changes from the novel, too. For example, we're told that trying to change things in the past results in Time "fucking you up", but Jake seems able to save lives without so much as a

“Spends an extraordinary time focusing on someone we dislike”

murmur, yet is almost killed – twice – while trying to overhear a conversation about Oswald. Why isn't this disparity fully explained? And who are the people who pop up and tell Jake he's not supposed to be there? We get a vague explanation in the novel, but here they could be anything.

Still, the central love story between Jake and Sadie (Sarah Gadon) is pleasing, as is the fact the JFK assassination scenes are shot in the real Dealey Plaza. It's just a shame that, for so much of this, Jake's adventures are limited to sitting around in a house and listening to Oswald speaking Russian in the flat downstairs. Just try to stay awake. **Jayne Nelson**

Sadie and Jake love
being in bookstores!

THE PUNISHER

Learning to love the pain in *Daredevil*

► UK Broadcast Netflix ► US Broadcast Netflix

✚ If your moral compass aligns remotely to the left of Attila the Hun then the Punisher is the guiltiest of pleasures.

Judge Dredd without the irony, Dirty Harry without the all-conquering Clint cool, he feels like a hero for any seething urban fantasist with a centrefold from *Guns & Ammo* magazine taped to their basement wall.

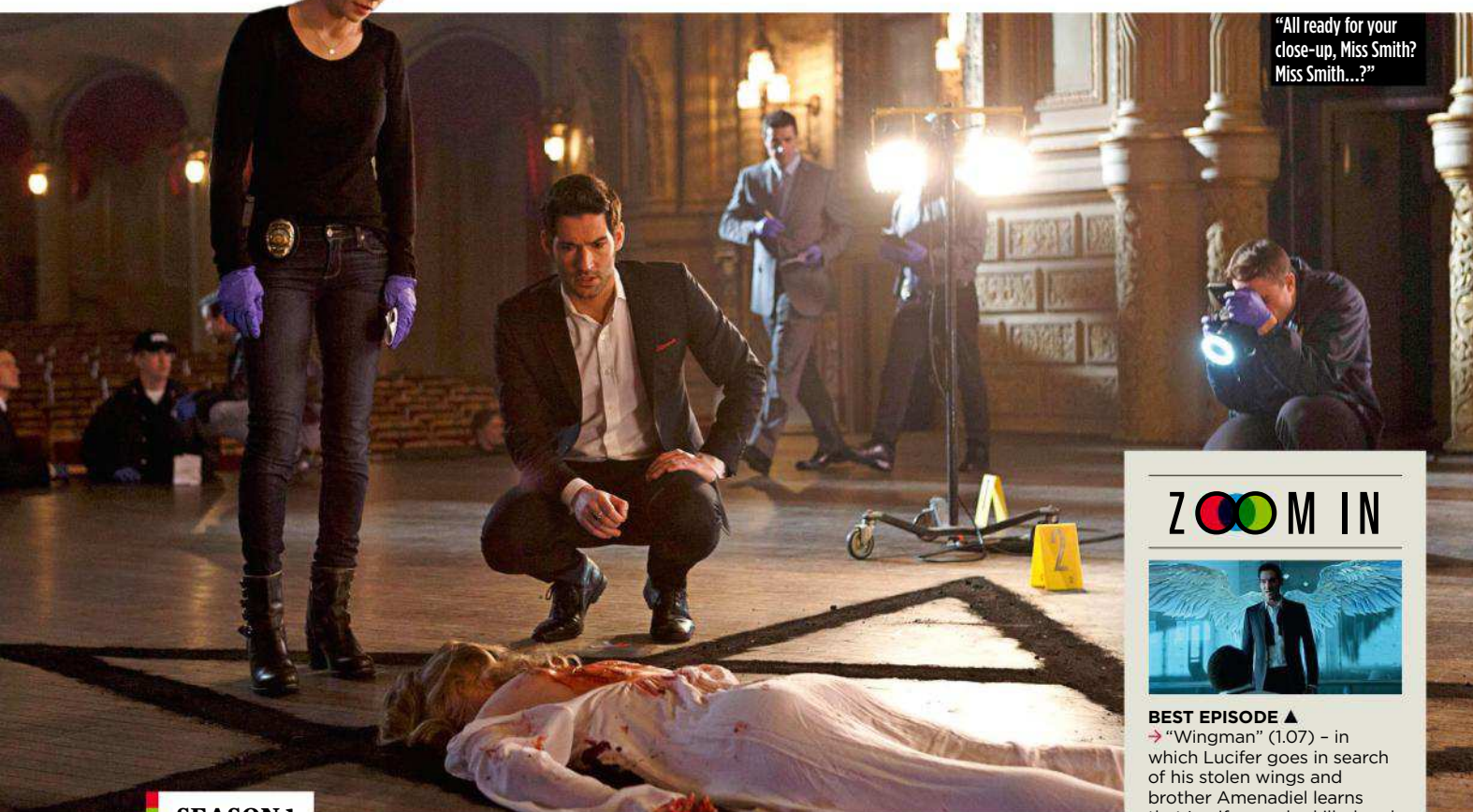
His intro in *Daredevil* plays unapologetically into this *Death Wish*-fulfilment. Frank Castle shoots up a roomful of Irish mobsters and stalks, Terminator-style, into a hospital packed with terrified, innocent people. I watched these moments at a public screening in New York. People around me whooped and cheered. I sunk into my chair, preparing to make my excuses if anyone offered to show me their collection of "knives 'n' shit".

Then something remarkable happened. The show began to remove the

layers of this remorseless killing machine, surgically expose the man behind the bullet-sprees and brutal beat-downs. "New York's Finest" was essentially an episode's worth of *Daredevil* and the Punisher discussing their respective methodologies on a rooftop, probing ideas of heroism and vigilantism with the kind of nuance and insight Zack Snyder could only dream of.

Of course Jon Bernthal's a physically perfect screen Punisher. In real life that nose has been broken no less than 13 times. A walking mass of scar tissue, he increasingly resembles the handiwork of Victor Frankenstein as the show's fights pile up. But Bernthal's a genuine revelation here, imbuing Frank Castle with a humanity that leaps from the screen. It's in his pain-soaked eyes and his fleeting, crooked grin.

Jon Bernthal made me love the Punisher. Without the guilt. **Nick Setchfield**



SEASON 1

LUCIFER

A devil in search of an image makeover

► **UK Broadcast** Amazon Prime Instant Video, finished

► **US Broadcast** Fox, finished

► **Episodes Reviewed** 1.01-1.12

◉ **Welcome to the horniest little devil** since Daryl Van Horne in *The Witches Of Eastwick*. Tom Ellis plays Lucifer Morningstar, the custodian of hell who's grown tired of an eternity torturing souls and getting a bad rap for it. So he decides to take a vacation, become a nightclub owner in Los Angeles and set about a major image makeover, one sexual conquest at a time. Or often, three sexual conquests at a time.

Loosely based on a Vertigo comic character created by Neil Gaiman, *Lucifer* quickly recovers from a shaky first few episodes to become a fluffily entertaining

comedy drama. Emphasis on comedy. Its main problem is a decision to turn it into a police procedural show. When a murder is committed outside Lucifer's nightclub the cop who's sent to investigate, Chloe (Lauren German), is singularly resistant to his charm; every other woman he wants, he gets. This resistance fascinates Lucifer and hey presto, TV's new crimebusting duo: the devil and the cop.

The procedural element is the weakest thing about the show. Luckily, the crimes aren't that important. Instead a pair of arc plots – one about Lucifer's angel brother Amenadiel coming to take him back to hell, another about one of Chloe's unsolved crimes rearing its head again – dovetail in clever and unexpected ways.

Another part of the fun is Lucifer's continuing quest to "learn what it is to be human" – he's like a highly sexed Data with a smutty schoolboy humour.

It's silly, very funny at times and yet knows when to get serious. Your enjoyment of it may depend on your tolerance for Ellis's highly mannered performance – part *Carry On Matron*, part James Bond, part Draco Malfoy. There's also the concern that the show never addresses the fact that Lucifer is Rohypnol incarnate: Chloe's the *only* woman he wants that he doesn't get so there *must* be something supernatural about his charm. You really want to see a few women wake up going, "Hang on – what did you do to me?" Maybe that's his lesson in humanity for season two. **Dave Golder**

"All ready for your close-up, Miss Smith? Miss Smith...?"

ZOOM IN



BEST EPISODE ▲

→ "Wingman" (1.07) – in which Lucifer goes in search of his stolen wings and brother Amenadiel learns that Lucifer can be killed and sent back to hell.

VITAL SUPPORT

→ Psychotherapy scenes are a bit of a cliché in US TV but Rachel Harris is hilarious as Lucifer's favourite shrink.

BEST CAMEO

→ The coffee shop barista in "Sweet Kicks" (1.05) who asks Mazekeen her name, looks confused, then later gives her a cup with "Mike" marker-penned on it.

BEST MOMENT

→ Maze and Amenadiel rutting in a car in "St Lucifer" (1.11) – Amenadiel's wings sprout as he climaxes, smashing the back window.

CARRY ON LUCIFER ▼

→ Considering Tom Ellis seems to be channeling *Carry On* star Leslie Phillips as Lucifer, it can't be a coincidence he says, "Ding dong!" in "Manly Whatnots" (1.04).





LINE UP

The month's most quotable dialogue

FELICITY SMOAK

"This is one of your crazier ideas, and that is a competitive field."

Arrow,
Episode 4.13



LUCIFER

"Why do they always associate me with goats? I don't even like their cheese!"

Lucifer,
Episode 1.12



NURSE

"How are you feeling?"

HELENA (WHO'S PREGNANT)

"A little tired and many farts."

Orphan Black,
Episode 4.02



CLAIRE FRASER

"I've had the most wonderful day. I lanced two boils, changed filthy dressings and saw my first case of full-blown scrofula."

Outlander,
Episode 2.03



SER DAVOS

"I assume you know why I'm here."

MELISANDRE

"I will after you tell me."

Game Of Thrones,
Episode 6.02



SCRIPT EASE

A TV season distilled

SEASON 1

DAMIEN

He's the antichrist, you know

UK Broadcast TBC

US Broadcast A&E, finished

Episodes Reviewed 1.01-1.07



We're introduced to our sort-of hero, **DAMIEN THORN**, who once used to be best mates with **MERLIN** but is now a war photographer taking pictures of carnage, death and destruction all around the world.

DAMIEN

Wherever I go, people die. You'd think I was cursed or something.

ANN RUTLEDGE

Hello, Damien. I'm a mysterious woman who's been watching you your whole life.

That "you think you're cursed" thing? It's because you're the antichrist. Surprise!

DAMIEN

Bollocks am I.

An OLD LADY screams "I love you, Damien!" before being shot dead. **DAMIEN'S GIRLFRIEND** dies horribly in a sinkhole. **HELL HOUNDS** follow him wherever he

goes, watching. He has flashbacks to his childhood, when his **NANNY** killed herself, also yelling that she loves Damien. And his father, **GREGORY PECK**, once tried to sacrifice him on an altar.

ANN RUTLEDGE

See? Death follows you everywhere. You're the antichrist.

DAMIEN

Bollocks am I. Also, Gregory Peck was my dad in the original 1976 movie when I was five. So I don't understand how I'm 30 in 2016. The maths is all wrong.

THE WRITERS

Shhhhh. Just go with it.

DAMIEN goes to a church for his girlfriend's funeral, and throws up.

ANN RUTLEDGE

You're sick in churches because you're the antichrist.

DAMIEN

Bollocks am I.

Someone tries to kill **DAMIEN** with one of the Daggers of Megiddo his dad once used; the assassin is sliced in two by a car. Someone who has been horrible to **DAMIEN** is killed by his tie being dragged into an escalator. It goes on. And on. Some of the deaths are impressively gross. Also, someone finds a dead chick in their bathroom drain, which for some weird reason is more gross than all the deaths put together.

DAMIEN

...Hmmm. This is starting to get weird.

ANN

I love you, Damien. Also, you're the antichrist.

After lots of brooding, being stared at by **HELL**

HOUNDS and being wound up by **ANN**, **DAMIEN** finally thinks "Sod this lark" and tries to kill himself. He fails and ends up in an asylum.

THE WRITERS

What this brand-new show needs are two episodes in which Damien wanders from room to room in an asylum seeing weird things in the dark, and then an entire episode that's just a fever-dream. They'll really help advance the plot!

THE AUDIENCE

We are so bored.

DAMIEN

It is surprisingly boring being the antichrist. Maybe I should take my shirt off a lot to make up for it.

A HUGE SECTION OF THE AUDIENCE

We love you, Damien!

Jayne Nelson



SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



MISSING LINE OF THE MONTH

How many viewers were begging Edd to burst in on Melisandre at this point in *Game Of Thrones* and go, "At least she scrubs up well"?



PROP OF THE MONTH

Forget the demonic limbo dancing and worry instead where that guy got that Dalek plunger from in *Houdini & Doyle*.



RUBBISH COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Jace gives it some Darth Maul but forgot the facepaint and won't mess his hair up for anyone in *Shadowhunters*.



BODY MOD OF THE MONTH

Man has tail attached in *Orphan Black* so his sexual partner won't know if he's coming or going.



DEJA VU OF THE MONTH

Is *Legends Of Tomorrow's* Arthur Darvill thinking, "This feels familiar... time travelling to the Wild West...?"



FRINGE ENTERTAINMENT OF THE MONTH

The Naked Muppet Show Tour reaches Siberia, but the Russians don't seem to appreciate Hunter and Bobbi's efforts in *Agents Of SHIELD*.



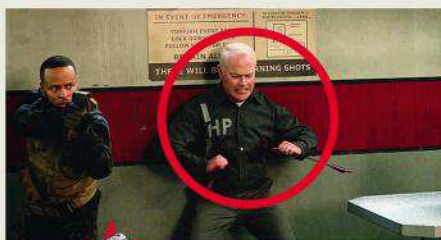
INNUENDO OF THE MONTH

Meek Mary Hawkins has her first encounter with a Brazilian in *Outlander*. She doesn't seem familiar with the tongue, either...



CROSSOVER OF THE MONTH

Is that Marvel's Mystique guest-starring in DC's *Supergirl*?



FASHION OF THE MONTH

Extreme nipple piercing for Damien Darhk in *Arrow*.



BOAST OF THE MONTH

The devil has balls. Lots of them, in *Lucifer*.

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2000 AD

So just how well do you know the galaxy's greatest comic?

Quizmaster: Will Salmon, News Editor

QUESTION 1

Name the three robots who worked for President "Bad" Bob Booth in *Judge Dredd*.

QUESTION 2

Which superhero team, also known as Task Force UK, were Zenith's parents members of?

QUESTION 3

Which famous real-world band pseudonymously released the single "Mutants In Mega City One" as The Fink Bros?

QUESTION 4 PICTURE QUESTION

What was Max Normal, Judge Dredd's bowler hat wearing criminal informant, sometimes known as?

QUESTION 5

In sci-fi sitcom *Spaced*, which 2000 AD character's death caused Tim to cry on his best friend Mike's shoulder?

QUESTION 6

What was the name of the two savage dogs that Big Dave liked to keep as pets?

QUESTION 7 PICTURE QUESTION

What was the young Judge Death's first name when he was still a mortal?

QUESTION 8

What was the name of the free gift that came with 2000 AD's very first "prog"?

QUESTION 9

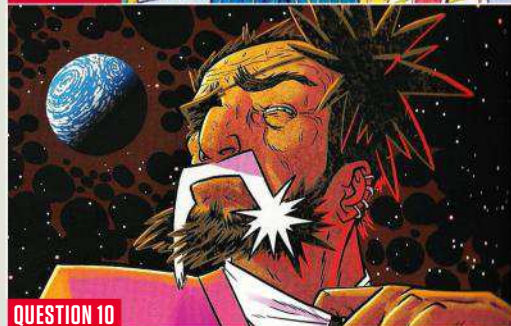
Name the rogue SJS Judge who conquered Mega-City One while Dredd was in the Cursed Earth...



QUESTION 4



QUESTION 7



QUESTION 10



QUESTION 20

QUESTION 10 PICTURE QUESTION

Which comics guru was said to be artist Henry Flint's visual inspiration for Dirty Frank?

QUESTION 11

Name the shady investigative organisation whose men in black temporarily replaced Tharg as editor in the '90s?



QUESTION 12

Which city block, named after a Clint Eastwood character, does Judge Dredd live in?

QUESTION 13

Which British comedian and 2000 AD fan appeared as a Judge in Prog 1933 last year?

QUESTION 14

What is the name given to Sláine's most favoured axe?

QUESTION 15

What is the fairytale-inspired middle name of Irish hitman Finnigan Sinister, of *Sinister Dexter* fame?

QUESTION 16

What does Tharg call a reader who owns a complete collection of 2000 AD progs?

QUESTION 17

Which 1990 science fiction film, directed by Richard Stanley, was inspired by the short strip "SHOK!", published in the 1981 *Judge Dredd Annual*?

QUESTION 18

In what year did the Apocalypse War between Mega-City One and East Meg One happen?

QUESTION 19

What does the DR in Moore and Davis's "DR & Quinch" stand for?

QUESTION 20 PICTURE QUESTION

Which pop star did artist Brian Bolland base his character designs for Judge Anderson on?

Answers
1 Snap, Crackle and Pop 2 Cloud 9 3 Madness 4 The Pinstripe Freak 5 Johnny Alpha 6 Zoltan and Kickboxer 7 Sydney 8 A space spinner 9 Judge Cal 10 Alan Moore 11 Vector 12 Rowdy Yates 13 Johnny Vegas 14 Brainbiter 15 Rapunzel 16 A Seto Thargo 17 Hardware 18 2104 19 Diminished Responsibility 20 Debbie Harry

How did you do?

Ineffectual future plod or hardened law master?



→ 0-5
Judge Fish



→ 6-10
Judge Rico



→ 11-15
Judge Hershey



→ 16-19
Judge Anderson



→ 20
Judge Dredd

Total Recall

Personal recollections of cherished sci-fi



DOCTOR WHO WEEKLY

Ian Berriman, Reviews Editor

There's only one magazine I own a complete run of: *Doctor Who Weekly*, all 43 issues lovingly assembled via eBay for considerably more than the 12p cover price. A quick sniff of their browning pages is all it takes to transport me back to childhood.

Launched by Dez Skinn, the genius behind *House of Hammer* and the original incarnation of *Starburst*, *Doctor Who Weekly* first hit newsagents in October 1979. It wasn't perfect. Reprinting old Marvel adaptations of HG Wells stories was a bit of a swizz, and I could have done without the regular page of "fascinating facts" like how long it takes to boil an ostrich egg. But in three areas it was a triumph.

Firstly, the lead strip, created by the likes of Dave Gibbons, Pat Mills and John Wagner. It had a sense of scale unachievable on TV, with say, futuristic tanks rolling through English villages or giant monsters attacking Daleks. Yet it was grounded too. I particularly love "The Star Beast". Kicking off in the fictional Blackcastle, it introduces *Who*'s first black, female companion – Sharon, a *Grange Hill*-like schoolgirl – and is set in a workaday northern industrial town reality. In one scene the Doctor escapes by hopping on a double-decker bus!



Just as good were the Doctor-free, monster-focused backup strips. A playground for characters like Abslom Daak – a bestubbed, bandolier-bedecked bruiser who sliced Daleks in half with his "chainsword" – they inhabited a fascinatingly darker, bleaker universe. An image of an evilly leering Auton, half its face melted off, is scorched into my psyche. That particular strip was penned by a chap called Alan Moore.

But perhaps most exciting was the feature content, overseen by *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society maven Jeremy Bentham. Here, for the first time, you could read synopses of black-and-white TV adventures like "The Sensorites" – which I believed I'd never have the slightest chance of seeing, and were therefore steeped in awe-inspiring mystery.

After issue 43, the *Weekly* emerged from its chrysalis as a *Monthly*. That later evolved again into *Doctor Who Magazine*, which this month celebrates its 500th edition. It's a remarkable achievement, and we take our hat off to all the editors, designers and writers who've kept the flame burning through the decades. ●

Ian Berriman still hasn't mastered Mr Bellamy's floating liquorice trick.

Fact Attack!

→ Pat Mills and John Wagner's strip "The Iron Legion" was based on a storyline they'd submitted to *Who* script editor Anthony Read.

→ The letters page of issue 10 features a missive from young fan Matthew Waterhouse. Not long afterwards he was cast as *Who* companion Adric.

→ Dalek killer Abslom Daak has appeared in the TV series – sort of! Artwork of the character is briefly glimpsed in 2014's "Time Heist".

→ *SFX* features editor Nick Setchfield is the proud owner of a page of artwork from "The Star Beast", bought from a comic shop in 1985.

SEE YOU
NEXT MONTH!
22 JUNE
DETAILS ON
PAGE 35

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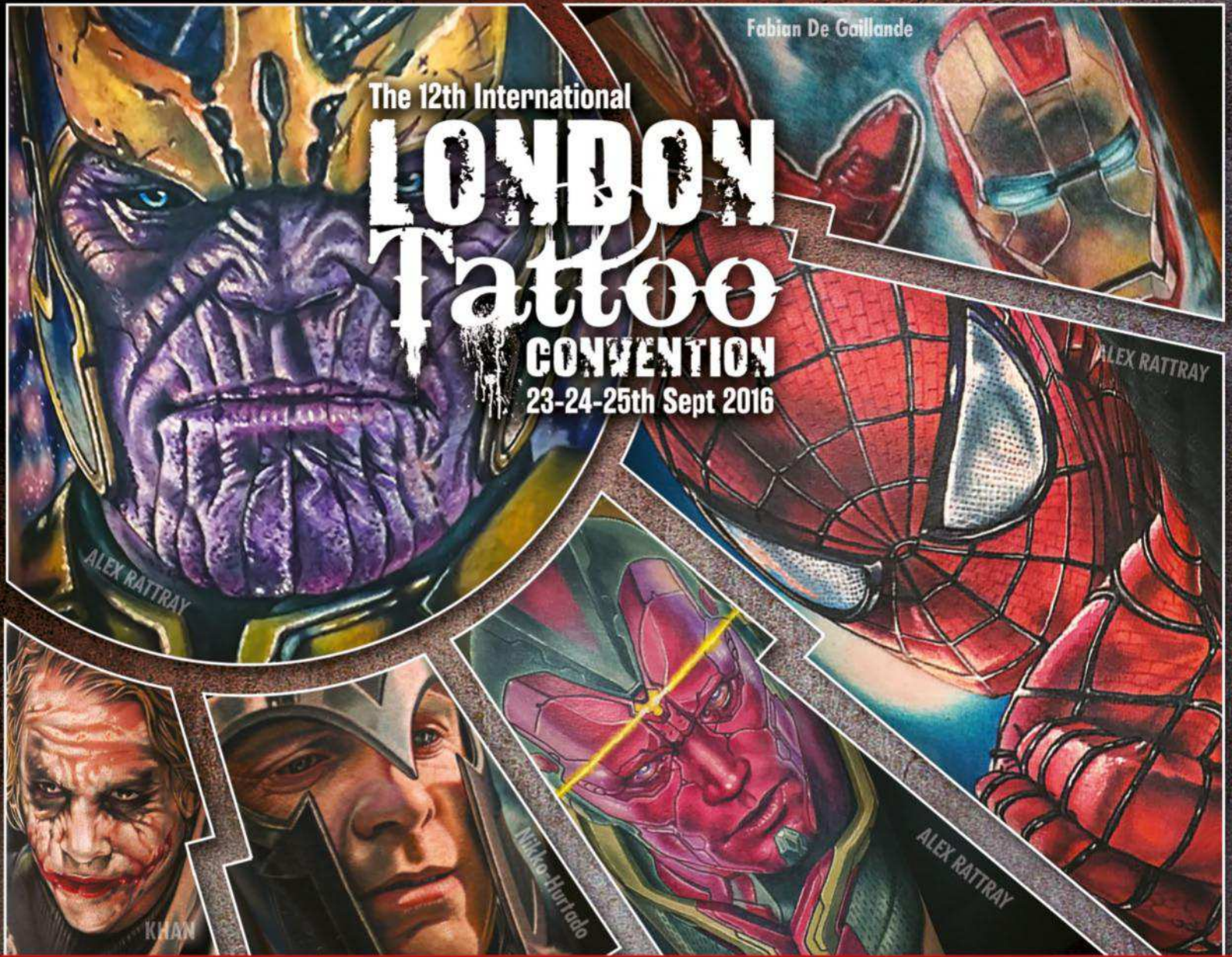
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